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THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS
OF THE
SUNDAY SCHOOL.

BY
W. H. WATSON,

One of the Secretaries of the Sunday School Union.

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P R E F A C E.

UPON the occasion of the Sunday School Union, in the year 1853, celebrating the Jubilee of that Institution, its history to that period was recorded in a volume prepared by one of the Secretaries and published by the Committee, entitled "THE HISTORY OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION."

A desire had been expressed for a Second Edition of that Work, and in preparing for a compliance with that request the Author discovered that the papers read at the Sunday School Convention of 1862 contained a large amount of information relative to the progress of the Sunday-school system which had not any connection with the history of the Sunday School Union.

He was therefore led to consider whether a volume devoted to the narrative of the origin and progress of the Sunday-school system during the first fifty years of its history, in which the proceedings of the Sunday School Union should be recorded only so far as they materially influenced that progress, might not be the most convenient

mode of preserving the memory of the facts which, under the guidance of Divine Providence, have resulted in the establishment of so wide-spread and beneficial agency.

The present volume is the result of that consideration, and is now submitted to the perusal especially of the friends of the religious training of the young, with the hope that it will excite gratitude to the Author of all Good, who has so wonderfully guided and blessed the thoughts and actions of His servants, and made them so extensively useful.

Should this contribution to the history of Christian efforts since Robert Raikes commenced the present Sunday-school system meet with acceptance, it will probably be followed by another volume, devoted more especially to a fuller detail of the manner in which the Sunday School Union has sought to extend and improve that system.

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THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

CHAPTER I.

*Early efforts for the moral and religious training
of the young.*

AMONG the various subjects which occupy the attention of the reflecting mind, there is, perhaps, no one more interesting than that which refers to the origin and gradual progress of events in the natural, the political, and the moral world. We behold the mighty river rolling its ample flood towards the ocean: in its course, it beautifies and fertilizes the land through which it passes: by its agency, that which would otherwise be a barren desert is converted into a fruitful field and furnishes food for millions both of man and beast. The traveller, anxious to examine the spring whence this blessing proceeds, traces the stream upwards to its source; and, after a long and painful journey, his curiosity is gratified. He then perceives how apparently insignificant in its early course is the stream, which, widening as it proceeds, at length confers blessings so varied and extensive.

Such also is the feeling with which we examine the progress of a mighty empire, that overruns the whole civilized world, and brings almost every known nation

into subjection to its authority. The historian traces back the steps by which it advanced to its power: he finds the limits within which that power operates, gradually contracted, and the authority, much more mildly exercised; till, at length, he reaches the time when a few hardy men, perhaps of doubtful character, under an able chief, found themselves a home in a few temporary dwellings, erected by them on that spot which after a few centuries became the metropolis of the world.

A curiosity of a similar kind is awakened with respect to the master minds to whom we are indebted for so much of our knowledge. While we admire the extent of their acquirements, and the readiness with which their mental treasures are brought out to enrich the world, we are naturally desirous of ascertaining the process by which these stores have been accumulated; and our delight is great when we become acquainted with the first feeble efforts of that intellect whose matured power holds nations in voluntary subjection.

In looking around upon society, at the present period, we can scarcely avoid being struck with the existence of numerous institutions designed to promote the moral and spiritual welfare of mankind. These institutions employ an extensive agency—they raise considerable funds, and exert a wide-spread influence. Their existence and prosperity are not dependent on worldly power, but are the result of voluntary Christian exertion, and they are producing an amount of good which defies calculation. Their origin, however, was obscure; their progress has been gradual; and it affords a pleasing employment to

the mind which sympathizes with their objects, to trace back their progress, and to contemplate the insignificant commencement of these benevolent efforts.

Among such institutions there is no one which has a greater claim to attentive regard, than the Sunday school, designed to train up the rising generation in the knowledge of God. The mode by which this object is attained is very simple. Individuals influenced by love to the Saviour, and concern for the welfare of the young, gather them together on the Lord's day, to unite in devotional exercises, to read the Word of God, to receive explanations of that word, and to attend public worship. It is impossible for anyone to doubt that such a discipline must be highly beneficial to the youthful mind. The Divine Word encourages us to believe that the Holy Spirit will make it effectual to the spiritual and eternal benefit of the soul; and experience has borne testimony to its blessed results. Two millions and a half of the rising generation of our land are enjoying the benefits of this system, under the care of more than three hundred thousand gratuitous teachers; while it is gradually making its way into other countries, and extending its influence throughout the earth.

But if we trace back this noble stream to its source, we shall find that it afforded but little prospect of attaining its present magnitude. The origin of Sunday schools presents an illustration of the fact, which has been often noticed, that the supposed inventions of later days, are but the development of ideas entertained in ages long since past, but which have either not been all at carried out into actual practice, or

have failed at that period to exert any permanent and wide-spread influence. The originator of Sunday schools appears to have been St. Charles Borromeo, Cardinal and Archbishop of Milan, and nephew of Pope Pius IV. He died in the year 1584, at the early age of forty-six, of a violent fever caught in the neighbouring mountains. The Rev. J. C. Eustace, in his "Classical Tour Through Italy," 7th edition, vol. 1, pp. 144—146, says of him, "It was his destiny to render to his people those great and splendid services which excite public applause and gratitude, and to perform at the same time those humbler duties which, though perhaps more meritorious, are more obscure, and sometimes produce more obloquy than acknowledgment. Thus, he founded schools, colleges, and hospitals, built parochial churches, most affectionately attended his flock during a destructive pestilence, erected a lazaretto, and served the forsaken victims with his own hands. These are duties uncommon, magnificent, and heroic, and are followed by fame and glory. But to reform a clergy and people depraved and almost barbarized by ages of war, invasion, internal dissension, and by their concomitant evils, famine, pestilence, and general misery: to extend his influence to every part of an immense diocese, including some of the wildest regions of the Alps, to visit every village in person, and to inspect and correct every disorder, are offices of little pomp, and of great difficulty. Yet, this laborious part of his pastoral charge he went through with the courage and the perseverance of an apostle, and so great was his success, that the diocese of Milan, (the most extensive perhaps in Italy, as it contains at

least 850 parishes,) became a model of decency, order, and regularity, and in this respect has excited the admiration of every impartial observer. The good effects of the zeal of St. Charles extended far beyond the limits of his diocese, and most of his regulations for the reformation of his clergy, such as the establishment of seminaries, yearly retreats, &c., were adopted by the Gallican church, and extended over France and Germany. Many of his excellent institutions still remain, and amongst others, that of Sunday schools; and it is both novel and affecting to behold on that day (Sunday) the vast area of the cathedral filled with children, forming two grand divisions of boys and girls, ranged opposite each other, and then again subdivided into classes according to their age and capacities, drawn up between the pillars, while two or more instructors attend each class, and direct their questions and explanations to every little individual without distinction. A clergyman attends each class, accompanied by one or more laymen for the boys, and for the girls by as many matrons. The lay persons are said to be oftentimes of the first distinction. Tables are placed in different recesses for writing. This admirable practice, so beneficial and so edifying, is not confined to the cathedral, or even to Milan. The pious Archbishop extended it to every part of his immense diocese, and it is observed in all the parochial churches of the Milanese, and of the neighbouring dioceses, of such at least as are suffragans of Milan."

A more recent traveller (Rev. J. Stoughton, "Scenes in Many Lands, with their Associations,") says, that he

was very anxious to ascertain whether the same practices still prevailed. "They do; and not only did we see the classes assembled in the churches, but in one or two cases there were school-rooms with forms placed, and the children gathering so completely *à l'Anglais*, that a Christian friend and Sabbath school teacher who accompanied me, observed, he could fancy himself at home, about to enter on his accustomed toils."

These schools are held from two to four o'clock in the afternoon, and are closed by the pastor with a catechetical discourse. The books used contain an explanation of the creed, the commandments, the Lord's prayer, and the sacraments, and have sometimes annexed an account of the festivals, fasts, and public ceremonies. Had these institutions extended beyond Milan and its neighbourhood into other countries, Borromeo might have been justly considered the founder of the Sunday school system. This was not the case. His example was not followed beyond the immediate circle in which it had arisen; and the Sunday afternoon catechetical exercises in the Romish or in the Protestant church cannot be at all identified with the modern Sunday school. There may have been individuals occasionally gathering together young persons for religious instruction on the Lord's day. This was done by the Rev. Jos. Alleine, author of the "Alarm to the Unconverted," in 1688; by Theophilus Lindsey, of Catterick, in 1763; by Miss Harrison, at Bedale, in 1765; and by Miss Ball, at High Wycombe, in 1769; and probably by many others whose names have not been recorded.* But all these were isolated

* Union Magazine, 1856, p. 140.

efforts; the influence of which ceased with the removal of the parties originating them. About the year 1780, the idea of thus benefiting the rising generation appears to have occurred to individuals residing in different localities. The Rev. David Simpson, M.A., minister of Christ Church, Macclesfield, opened a school there in 1778. It seems to have been principally designed for instruction on the week-day evenings, but on Sunday those scholars who could not conveniently attend the week-day evening schools, were, together with those scholars who did, taught to spell and read, and the whole of them were regularly taken to church every Sabbath day. The teachers employed were paid teachers, and this system of management continued until 1786, when Mr. Simpson gave up the schools into the hands of the committee for the Sunday schools. In 1796 paid teachers were entirely discontinued, and a new system of conducting the school commenced under Mr. Simpson's sanction and auspices.*

But it would be incorrect to assign the origination of the present Sunday school system to any of these praiseworthy efforts. Had not Divine Providence raised up some other instrumentality, the work would not have been done. They, however, prove in what direction the minds of Christian men were turning, and they prepared the way for the apparently accidental occurrence which was to commence the systematic and general instruction of the young on the Lord's day.

* Sunday School Teachers' Magazine, 1842, p. 114.

CHAPTER II.

The intellectual, moral, and religious condition of England shortly previous to the establishment of Sunday schools.

BEFORE, however, proceeding to detail the circumstances connected with the introduction of the Sunday school system into England, it may be desirable to take a retrospective view of the intellectual, moral, and religious condition of England shortly previous to the establishment of Sunday schools. A great change will be found to have taken place, a change which will be universally admitted to be for the better, and the subsequent narrative will show that the change must be in a great degree attributed to the establishment and progress of that Sunday school system, the origination of which we cannot but attribute to that good man, Robert Raikes.

The history of England, for some years prior to that event, presents a very painful picture as it respects the intellectual cultivation of the people. The two universities of Oxford and Cambridge were then the places where those who were to be the governors and instructors of the people completed their education; and it will be readily perceived that the discipline exercised there would influence all their previous studies. "But," says Dr. Swift, "I have heard more than one or two persons of high rank declare they could learn nothing

more at Oxford and Cambridge than to drink ale and smoke tobacco; wherein I firmly believe them, and could have added some hundred examples from my own observations in one of these universities"—meaning that of Oxford. Gibbon, the historian, who was a member of Magdalen College there, says he was never once summoned to attend even the ceremony of a lecture, and in the course of one winter might make, unreproved, in the midst of term, a tour to Bath, a visit into Buckinghamshire, and a few excursions to London. Dr. Johnson gives the following account of his outset at Pembroke College:—"The first day after I came, I waited on my tutor, Mr. Jordan, and then stayed away four. On the sixth, Mr. Jordan asked me why I had not attended; I answered I had been sliding in Christ Church meadow." This apology appears to have been given without the least compunction, and received without the least reproof. While such laxity existed in the oversight of the students, it became a matter of necessity that the examination for degrees should be correspondingly easy, and such was the case. Lord Eldon gives the following account of his examination in 1770:—"An examination for a degree at Oxford was, in my time, a farce. I was examined in Hebrew and in history. 'What is the Hebrew for the place of a skull?' I replied, 'Golgotha.' 'Who founded University College?' I stated (though, by the way, the point is sometimes doubted) that King Alfred founded it. 'Very well, sir,' said the examiner, you are competent for your degree'" In 1780, Dr. Vicesimus Knox says, "The greatest dunce usually gets his TESTIMONIUM signed with as much ease and credit as

the finest genius. . . . The statutes require that he should translate familiar English phrases into Latin, and now is the time when the masters show their wit and jocularly. I have known the questions on this occasion to consist of an inquiry into the pedigree of a race-horse." It could not be expected that the examination would be very strict, as the examiners were chosen by the candidate himself from among his friends, and he was expected to provide a dinner for them after the examination was over. Lord Chesterfield, in his *Essays*, speaking in the character of a country gentleman, satirically observes, "When I took away my son from school, I resolved to send him directly abroad, having been at Oxford myself."

These facts will give some idea of the training to which the upper classes of society were subjected, and will show how little, intellectually, could be expected from it. With respect to the middle and lower classes of society, the educational institutions founded in prior ages had become the subject of great abuse, and had been, in a great degree, diverted from the objects for which they were designed, while the parochial charity schools afforded but a modicum of instruction to a very small portion of the population.

It will not be thought surprising that the moral condition of the people was not more satisfactory than their intellectual. It would, perhaps, be unfair to rely on the pictorial representations of Hogarth, or on the fictitious narratives of Smollett and Fielding, because it may be apprehended that their desire to produce effect may have led them into exaggeration, if not into

caricature. Still, the probability is that those works would not have attained their celebrity had they not given something like a fair representation of the existing manners of the people. Had their pictures of the grossness and vice which characterized the period now under review, been destitute of truth, surely the feelings of the nation would have revolted against such exhibitions, the only justification for which was to be found in their general truthfulness. But without depending too much on this evidence, there are, in addition, facts on record which show most conclusively that ignorance and vice were closely associated. To refer again to Oxford. Lord Eldon stated that he had seen there a Doctor of Divinity so far the worse for a convivial entertainment that he was unable to walk home without leaning for support with his hand upon the walls, but having, by some accident, staggered to the Rotunda of the Radcliffe Library, which was not then protected by a railing, he continued to go round and round, wondering at the unwonted length of the street, but still revolving and supposing he went straight, until some friend—perhaps the future chancellor himself—relieved him from his embarrassment and set him on his way. Even where there might be no such excess as this, the best company of the day would devote a long time to the circulation of the bottle. With such examples before them, it is not surprising that drunkenness should be found to prevail amongst the lower classes. In the year 1736, there were in London 207 inns, 447 taverns, 551 coffee-houses, 5975 alehouses, and 8659 brandy-shops, making a total of 15,839. The population at that time was about 630,000. In a century

afterwards, 1835, the population had advanced to 1,776,500, but the number of houses where intoxicating liquors were sold had greatly diminished—not then exceeding 5000; so that, in proportion to the population, there were at the former period nine times as many such places open as at the latter.

Another feature of the period of English history shortly previous to the establishment of Sunday schools, was the prevalence of gaming. It was discountenanced by both the second and third Georges, but flourished notwithstanding. There is one case recorded of a lady who lost 3,000 guineas at one sitting, at loo. Among the men, Brookes' Club and White's are mentioned as more especially the seats of high play. Mr. Wilberforce coming up to London, as a young man of fortune, says:—"The very first time I went to Boodle's, I won twenty-five guineas of the Duke of Norfolk." Many in that age were the ancestral forests felled and the goodly lands disposed of to gratify this passion. The discovery of a new game in the last years of the American war tended greatly to diffuse the spirit of gaming from the higher to the lower classes. This was the E. O. table, which was thought to be beyond the reach of law, because not distinctly specified in any statute. In 1782, a bill was brought in, providing severe penalties against this or any other new game of chance. The bill passed the Commons, but the session closed before it had got through the House of Lords. In the debates upon this subject, Mr. Byng, the member for Middlesex, stated that in two parishes only of Westminster there were 296 E. O. tables. Another member stated that E. O. tables might be found at almost

every country town. Servants and apprentices, it seems, were drawn in to take part in these games, cards of direction to them being often thrown down the areas of the houses, and the comers in were allowed to play on Sundays as freely as on other days. Sheridan, who, from his own private life, could not be expected to view the new bill with any great favour, said against it with some truth, that "it would be in vain to prohibit E. O. tables while a more pernicious mode of gaming was countenanced by law—he meant the gaming in the lottery." Private lotteries were, indeed, prohibited, but State lotteries had long been ranked amongst the ordinary sources of revenue. This "lottery madness," as it has been truly termed, was, it seems, indulged in by night as well as by day. A traveller to London in 1775 observes, that he could not help looking with displeasure at the number of paper lanthorns that dangled before the doors of lottery offices, considering them as so many false lights hung out to draw fools to their destruction.

If we inquire further into the moral habits of that age, the result will be such as might be expected from the prevalence of such ill practices as drinking and gaming. We may guess the customary nature of the talk and songs after dinner when we find that in great houses the chaplain was expected to retire with the ladies. But in many cases we find this want of moral refinement extended even to the latter. Sir Walter Scott records that his grand-aunt applied to him in his young years to obtain for her perusal the novels of Mrs. Afra Behn, some of the most licentious in the language. Scott, though not without some qualms, complied with the request. The volumes

were, however, speedily returned. "Take back your bonny Mrs. Behn," said Mrs. Keith, "and if you will follow my advice, put her in the fire." "But is it not a strange thing," she added, "that I, a woman of eighty, sitting alone, feel myself ashamed to look through a book which, sixty years ago, I have heard read aloud for the amusement of large circles of the best company in London?"

In those days, also, the high roads leading into London were infested by robbers on horseback, who bore the name of highwaymen. Private carriages and public conveyances were alike the objects of attack. Thus, in 1775, Mr. Nuthall, the solicitor and friend of Lord Chatham, returning from Bath in his carriage with his wife and child, was stopped and fired at near Hounslow, and died of the fright. In the same year, the guard of the Norwich stage was killed in Epping Forest, after he had himself shot dead three highwaymen out of seven that had assailed him. Nor were such examples few and far between; they might, from the records of that time, be numbered by the score, although, in most cases, the loss was rather of property than of life. Horace Walpole, writing from Strawberry Hill, complains that, having lived there in quiet for thirty years, he cannot now stir a mile from his own house after sunset without one or two servants armed with blunderbusses. But what is most important to us, as illustrating the general state of morals, is the astonishing fact that some of the best writers of the last century treat these acts of outrage as subjects of jest and almost of praise. It was the tone in certain circles to depict the highwaymen as daring and

generous spirits, who "took to the road," as it was termed, under the pressure of some momentary difficulties—the gentlefolk, as it were, of the profession, and far above the common run of thieves.

But it may be asked, Were there not some controlling religious influences at work to counteract these results of ignorance and immorality? Doubtless there were, but to a lamentably small extent. John Newton, who laboured at St. Mary Woolnoth's, Lombard Street, declared that when he came to that church, he was nearly, if not quite, the only clergyman in the City of London who preached the gospel. This may have been like the despairing language of Elijah, "I only am left alone;" and yet it could not have been used if the religious character of the clergy had not fallen very low. There is other evidence to this lamentable fact. Dr. Thomas Newton, Bishop of Bristol, thus complains of the neglect of duty on the part of the cathedral clergy:—"Never was Church more shamefully neglected. The Bishop has several times been there for months together without seeing the face of dean or prebendary, or anything better than a minor canon." And as, in some cases, there were undisguised neglects of duty, so in others we may trace its jocular evasion. On one of the prebendaries of Rochester Cathedral dining with Bishop Pearce, the Bishop asked him, "Pray, Dr. S., what is your time of residence at Rochester?" "My lord," said he, "I reside there the better part of the year." But the doctor's meaning, and also the real fact was, that he resided at Rochester only during the week of the audit. Among the laity, as might have been expected, a corresponding

neglect of church ordinances was too often found. Bishop Newton cites it as a most signal and unusual instance of religious duty, that Mr. George Grenville "regularly attended the service of the church every Sunday morning, even while he was in the highest offices." Not only was Sunday the common day for cabinet councils and cabinet dinners, but the very hours of its morning service were frequently appointed for political interviews and conferences. Nor was the state of religion more satisfactory amongst those who did not conform to the Established Church. The successors of the Puritans had sadly fallen away from the fervour and soundness of the religious principle of their ancestors, and from many of their pulpits the doctrines of Socinianism were preached, while the minutes of the Methodist Conference, in May, 1765, contain the following entry:—"Do not our people in general talk too much and read too little? They do."

The preceding illustrations of life and manners in the age immediately preceding the introduction of the Sunday school system, are chiefly gathered from the concluding chapter of Lord Mahon's "History of England, from 1713 to 1783." His lordship had previously given a narrative of those fearful events which may not unfairly be attributed to the debased intellectual, moral, and religious condition of the nation when, in June, 1780, under the pretence of a regard to the Protestant religion, numerous Roman Catholic chapels, the residence of Sir George Saville, in Leicester Square, of Lord Mansfield, in Bloomsbury Square, and the gaol of Newgate, which had cost £140,000, were gutted and destroyed.

For two whole days London was in possession of a mob, and thirty-six fires could be seen blazing in various parts of it. Lord Mahon states that "throughout England the education of the labouring classes was most grievously neglected, the supineness of the clergy of that age being manifest on this point as on every other." He also quotes the testimony of Hannah More, who declares that "on first going to the village of Cheddar, near the cathedral city of Wells, we found more than 200 people in the parish, almost all very poor, no gentry, a dozen wealthy farmers, hard, brutal, and ignorant. . . . We saw but one Bible in all the parish, and that was used to prop a flower-pot!"

The preceding review will excite thankfulness that the nation now presents so different a prospect to the observant eye, whether regarded intellectually, morally, or religiously. The question is, to what must the change be attributed? On this subject the judgment of Lord Mahon is very distinct, and we believe we cannot do better than give the words of this enlightened and impartial witness.

"Among the principal means which, under Providence, tended to a better spirit in the coming age, may be ranked the system of Sunday schools:" and he quotes the testimony of Adam Smith to their value, in these remarkable words: "No plan has promised to effect a change of manners with equal ease and simplicity since the days of the Apostles." It cannot, therefore, be without interest to inquire by whom this beneficial system was introduced, and in what way its influence has extended.

CHAPTER III.

*The establishment of Sunday Schools by
Mr. Robert Raikes.*

IN the year 1781, an individual, of no great note in society, went one morning to hire a gardener in the suburbs of the city in which he dwelt, where the lowest of the people, who were principally employed in the pin manufactory, chiefly resided. The man whom he went to hire was from home ; and while waiting for his return, he was greatly disturbed by a troop of wretched, noisy boys, who interrupted him, as he conversed with the man's wife on the business he came about. He inquired whether these children belonged to that part of the town, and lamented their misery and idleness. "Ah! sir," said the woman, "could you take a view of this part of the town on Sunday, you would be shocked indeed ; for then the street is filled with multitudes of these wretches, who, released on that day from employment, spend their time in noise and riot, playing at chuck, and cursing and swearing in a manner so horrid as to convey to any serious mind an idea of hell rather than any other place." This conversation suggested to Robert Raikes, of Gloucester—for he was the individual—the idea of attempting to stop this profanation of the Lord's day: the word "try" was so powerfully impressed on his

mind as to decide him at once to action; and many years afterwards he remarked to Joseph Lancaster, "I can never pass by the spot where the word 'try' came so powerfully into my mind, without lifting up my hands and heart to heaven in gratitude to God for having put such a thought into my head."

The particular mode adopted by Mr. Raikes to accomplish his object was as follows. Having found four persons who had been accustomed to instruct children in reading, he engaged to pay them one shilling each, for receiving and instructing such children as he should send to them every Sunday. The children were to come soon after ten in the morning, and stay till twelve; they were then to go home and return at one; and, after reading a lesson, were to be conducted to church. After church, they were to be employed in repeating the catechism till half-past five, and then to be dismissed, with an injunction to go home quietly, and by no means to make a noise in the street.

Such was the humble commencement of the Sunday school system. The contrast between the school just described, and a well-conducted school of the present day, is so great, that the resemblance can scarcely be perceived. We look in vain for the infant class, designed to convey even to babes the elements of religious knowledge: we fear there could not be any systematic instruction in the Scriptures imparted to the children more advanced in age; much less should we expect to find, in these early efforts, any provision for the instruction of youths growing up into manhood. The pious and enlightened superintendent and secretary,

with their devoted band of voluntary and gratuitous teachers, were also wanting; nor would the most diligent inquiry have discovered a lending library attached to any of these schools, for the use of the scholars during the week.

Still the effect produced by these efforts was considerable. Mr. Raikes states, in a letter to Colonel Townley, a gentleman in Lancashire, who had made inquiries relative to these new institutions—"It is now three years since we began; and I wish you were here, to make inquiry into the effect. A woman who lives in a lane where I had fixed a school, told me, some time ago, that the place was quite a heaven upon Sundays, compared to what it used to be. The numbers who have learned to read, and say their catechism, are so great that I am astonished at it. Upon the Sunday afternoon the mistresses take their scholars to church,—a place into which neither they nor their ancestors ever entered with a view to the glory of God. But what is more extraordinary, within this month these little ragamuffins have in great numbers taken it into their heads to frequent the early morning prayers which are held every morning at the cathedral, at seven o'clock. I believe there were near fifty this morning. They assemble at the house of one of the mistresses, and walk before her to church, two and two, in as much order as a company of soldiers."

Two years had scarcely elapsed, when Robert Raikes invited some friends to breakfast; the window of the room where they were seated opening into a small garden, and there were beheld, sitting on seats, one row

above another, the children of the first Sunday school, neatly dressed. They were purposely exhibited to the breakfast party, to interest them in the design, but so little were the momentous consequences then appreciated, that a Quaker lady rebuked Mr. Raikes in these words, "Friend Raikes, when thou doest charitably, thy right hand should not know what thy left hand doeth." The fair Quaker might have forgotten that there is another text, which says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven." *

For three years the Sunday schools gradually extended in Mr. Raikes' neighbourhood, to which they were then confined, and several clergymen contributed to the success of the scheme by their personal attentions.

The position of Mr. Raikes, as proprietor and printer of the "Gloucester Journal," enabled him to make public this new scheme of benevolence; and a notice inserted in that paper, on Nov. 3, 1783, having been copied into the London papers, attention was soon drawn to the subject. The application we have referred to from Colonel Townley was one of the results; and, at his request, the letter of Mr. Raikes in answer, from which we have made an extract, was inserted in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for 1784. Thus the idea of Sunday schools was widely diffused, and several were opened in various parts of the kingdom.

In a letter, addressed by Mr. Raikes to Mrs. Harris, of Chelsea, under date November 5, 1787, he gives the following particulars as to the manner in which the

* Sunday School Teachers' Magazine, 1841. p. 22.

schools established by him were conducted:—"I endeavour to assemble the children as early as is consistent with their perfect cleanliness—our indispensable rule: the hour prescribed in our rules is eight o'clock, but it is usually half-after eight before our flock is collected. Twenty is the number allotted to each teacher, the sexes kept separate. The twenty are divided into four classes; the children who show any superiority in attainments, are placed as leaders of the several classes, and are employed in teaching the others their letters, or in hearing them read in a low whisper, which may be done without interrupting the master or mistress in their business, and will keep the attention of the children engaged, that they do not play or make a noise. Their attending the service of the church once a-day has to me seemed sufficient, for their time may be spent more profitably perhaps in receiving instruction, than in being present at a long discourse, which their minds are not yet able to comprehend: but people may think differently on this point. * * * The stipend to the teachers here is a shilling each Sunday, but we find them firing, and bestow gratuities as rewards of diligence, which may make it worth sixpence more. * * * It had sometimes been a difficult task to keep the children in proper order, when they were all assembled at church, but I now sit very near them myself, which has had the effect of preserving the most perfect decorum. After the sermon in the morning they return home to dinner, and meet at the schools at half-after one, and are dismissed at five, with strict injunctions to observe a quiet behaviour, free from all noise and clamour. Before the

business is begun in the morning, they all kneel down while a prayer is read, and the same before dismissal in the evening. To those children who distinguish themselves as examples of diligence, quietness in behaviour, observance of order, kindness to their companions, &c., &c., I give some little token of my regard, as a pair of shoes if they are barefooted, and some who are very bare of apparel, I clothe. This I have been enabled to do in many instances, through the liberal support given me by my brothers in the city. By these means I have acquired considerable ascendancy over the minds of the children. Besides, I frequently go round to their habitations, to inquire into their behaviour at home, and into the conduct of the parents, to whom I give some little hints now and then, as well as to the children. * * * It is that part of our Saviour's character which I am imitating, 'He went about doing good.' No one can form an idea what benefits he is capable of rendering to the community, by the condescension of visiting the dwellings of the poor. You may remember the place without the South-gate, called Littleworth; it used to be the St. Giles' of Gloucester. By going amongst those people I have totally changed their manners. They avow, at this time, that the place is quite a heaven to what it used to be. Some of the vilest of the boys are now so exemplary in behaviour, that I have taken one into my own service." *

A question has been raised, as to whether the idea, from which such great results have followed, originated with Mr. Raikes, or was suggested to him by the Rev.

* Sunday School Teachers' Magazine, 1831. pp. 617—620.

Mr. Stock, curate of St. John's, Gloucester. In a letter, dated February 2, 1788, Mr. Stock makes the following statement: — "Mr. Raikes meeting me one day by accident at my own door, and, in the course of conversation, lamenting the deplorable state of the lower classes of mankind, took particular notice of the situation of the poorer children. I had made, I replied, the same observation, and told him, if he would accompany me into my own parish, we would make some attempt to remedy the evil. We immediately proceeded to the business, and procuring the names of about ninety children, placed them under the care of four persons, for a stated number of hours on the Sunday. As minister of the parish, I took upon me the principal superintendence of the schools, and one-third of the expense." Mr. Stock adds, "The progress of this institution through the kingdom, is justly to be attributed to the constant representations which Mr. Raikes made in his own paper (the Gloucester Journal), of the benefits which he perceived would probably arise from it." * This statement is not inconsistent with that which has been already given; it by no means follows, that the idea had not already occurred to Mr. Raikes, previously to this interview with Mr. Stock. There can, indeed, be no doubt that such was the case, so distinctly did Mr. Raikes repeatedly refer to the circumstance. The Rev. Dr. Kennedy, of New York, in addressing the State Convention of Sabbath school teachers, held at Newhaven, Connecticut, in June, 1858, said, "Many years ago, in one of the older cities of England, two men might have

* Fenny Cyclopedia, vol. 21, p. 37.

been seen walking together, the one older than the other, and leaning on the arm of his younger friend. When they reached a certain place, the elder of the two said 'Pause here;' and so saying, he uncovered his brow, closed his eyes, and stood for a moment in silent prayer. That place was the site of the first Sabbath school, and the elder man was Robert Raikes, its founder. He paused on the spot, and that silent prayer ascended to the ear of the crucified Christ, and the tears rolled down his cheeks as he said to his friend, 'This is the spot on which I stood when I saw the destitution of the children, and the desecration of the Sabbath by the inhabitants of the town; and I asked, 'Can nothing be done?' and a voice answered 'Try'—and I did try—and see what God hath wrought!" *

Many interesting anecdotes are related of the success Mr. Raikes met with in his exertions on behalf of the young. One sulky, stubborn girl, who had resisted both reproofs and correction, and who refused to ask forgiveness of her mother, was melted, by his saying to her, "Well, if you have no regard for yourself, I have much for you; you will be ruined and lost if you do not become a good girl; and if you will not humble yourself, I must humble myself, and make a beginning for you." He, with much solemnity, entreated the mother to forgive her. This overcame the girl's pride, she burst into tears, and on her knees, begged forgiveness, and never gave any trouble afterwards. Mr. Church, a considerable manufacturer of flax and hemp, was asked by Mr. Raikes, if he perceived any difference in the

* Report of the doings of the Second State Convention, p. 103.

poor children he employed? "Sir," said he, "the change could not have been more extraordinary, in my opinion, had they been transformed from the shape of wolves and tigers to that of men. In temper, disposition, and manners, they could hardly be said to differ from the brute creation, but since the establishment of Sunday schools, they have seemed anxious to show that they are not the ignorant, illiterate creatures they were before. They are anxious to gain the favour and good opinion of those who kindly instruct and admonish them. They are also become more tractable and obedient, and less quarrelsome and revengeful." The good effects of the care bestowed on the scholars were also seen in their families. One boy, the son of a journeyman currier of dissipated habits, after being some time in the school, told Mr. Raikes that his father was wonderfully changed, and had left off going to the alehouse on a Sunday. Soon afterwards Raikes met the father in the street, and expressed the pleasure he felt in hearing of the change in his conduct. "Sir," said he, "I may thank you for it." "Nay," said Raikes, "that is impossible; I do not recollect that I ever spoke to you before." "No, sir," he replied, "but the good instruction you give my boy, he brings home to me, and it is that, sir, which has induced me to reform my life." Many years afterwards, as Raikes, on a week-day, was entering the door of the cathedral, he overtook a soldier, and accosting him, said it gave him great pleasure to see that he was going to a place of worship. "Ah!" said he, "I may thank you for that." "Me!" said Raikes, "why, I don't know that I ever saw you before." "Sir," replied the soldier,

“when I was a little boy I was indebted to you for my first instruction in duty. I used to meet you at the morning service in this cathedral, and was one of your Sunday scholars. My father, when he left this city, took me into Berkshire, and put me apprentice to a shoemaker. I used often to think of you. At length I went to London, and was there drawn to serve as a militia-man in the Westminster Militia. I came to Gloucester last night with a deserter, and took the opportunity of coming this morning to visit the old spot, and in hopes of once more seeing you.” *

In the autograph collection of Mr. Charles Reed, F.S.A., there is a letter of Robert Raikes to the Rev. Mr. Bowen Thickers, Ross, Herefordshire, dated June 27th, 1788, in which he says—“At Windsor the ladies of fashion pass their Sundays in teaching the [poorest children. The Queen sent for me the other day to give Her Majesty an account of the effect observable on the manners of the poor, and Her Majesty most graciously said that she envied those who had the power of doing good by thus personally promoting the welfare of society in giving instruction and morals to the general mass of the people; a pleasure from which, by her situation, she was debarred.”

* The Sunday School Jubilee, 1831, p. 17.

CHAPTER IV.

*The formation of the Sunday School Society and
establishment of the Stockport School.*

In the year 1785, William Fox, Esq., a deacon of the Baptist Church, in Prescott Street, London, formerly a merchant in that city, and afterwards of Lechlade, in Gloucestershire, feeling deeply interested in the general education of the poor, and believing that this new system afforded the means of promoting that object, entered into correspondence with Mr. Raikes on the subject. He had long felt compassion for the indigent and ignorant poor, and had opened a school at his own expense in the village of Clapton, near Bourton-on-the-Water. He found it impossible to extend the advantages of daily instruction to a circle sufficiently extended to satisfy his desires, yet feared it would be almost as impossible to teach children to read by their attendance at schools only one day in seven. To his great delight he found himself mistaken in this particular, and to him was assigned the honour and the happiness of devising a scheme that greatly facilitated the wide diffusion of instruction on the simple and efficient plan of Sunday school teaching. In Raikes' reply to his first letter, he observed, that he too at first expected but little from the attendance of the children on Sundays only, but that it

had been highly important by exciting in them and their parents a desire to gain further instruction, and that many were found giving the teachers a penny a week to allow the children to read to them on a week-day in the intervals of labour. At this time also Mr. Raikes communicated to Mr. Fox the following interesting fact. "An attempt had been made to establish Sunday schools in the Forest of Dean among the children of the colliers, a most savage race. A person from Mitchel Dean called upon Raikes to report the progress of the undertaking, and observed, 'We have many children who three months ago knew not a letter from a cart wheel who can now repeat hymns in a manner that would astonish you.' Some were so much delighted with Dr. Watts's little hymns that they could repeat the whole work. Several could read in the Testament, and some repeated whole chapters. The effect on their manners was equally pleasing. At the public examination one of the conductors of the school pointed to a very ill-looking lad, about 13, and said, 'that boy was the most profligate lad in this neighbourhood. He was the leader of every kind of mischief and wickedness. He never opened his lips without a profane or indecent expression: and now he is become orderly and good-natured, and in his conversation has quite left off profaneness.' All the children conducted themselves in an orderly manner, and several of them, amongst whom was the boy just mentioned, joined in singing a hymn, to the great delight of their benefactors. These children had no other opportunities than what they derived from their Sabbath instruction." *

* The Sunday School Jubilee, 1831—pp. 17, 18.

On the 7th September, 1785, Mr. Fox succeeded in forming the "Society for the Establishment and Support of Sunday Schools throughout the Kingdom of Great Britain." Mr. Jonas Hanway, Mr. Henry Thornton, and Mr. Samuel Hoare, who became treasurer, co-operated in the formation of this new institution; and it immediately received considerable encouragement and support. In the first report of the committee, in January, 1786, they stated that they had established five schools in the neighbourhood of London, and had received subscriptions to the amount of £987 0s. 6d. At the meeting at which this report was presented, letters approving the object of the Society were read from the Bishops of Salisbury and Llandaff. The Bishop of Chester (Dr. Porteus) also recommended the formation of Sunday schools in his extensive diocese. The poet Cowper, in a letter to the Rev. John Newton, dated September 24th, 1784, and the Rev. J. Wesley, in a letter to the Rev. Richard Rodda, Chester, dated June 17th, 1785, also stated their conviction of the benefits to be expected from these schools.

The great impediment to the prosperity of these new institutions was the expense of hiring teachers. It appears that, from 1786 to 1800, the Sunday School Society alone paid upwards of £4,000 for this purpose. At Stockport, in 1784, the teachers were paid 1s. 6d. every Sunday for their services; but by degrees gratuitous teachers arose; so that, in 1794, out of nearly thirty, six only were hired: the rest voluntarily put themselves under the direction of the visitors. The beneficial effects were soon apparent; and from that

time the number of scholars and teachers, and the amount of subscriptions, regularly increased. In a few years hired teachers were wholly relinquished in the Stockport school.

Gradually the system of hiring gave way almost universally to the employment of gratuitous teachers; by which means a great obstacle to the extension of the system was removed. To remunerate the present number of teachers, at the rate paid to those in the Stockport school, of 1s. 6d. each Sunday, would amount, if the number of teachers be estimated at 300,000, to nearly £1,200,000 per annum. The idea of conducting these institutions by unpaid teachers is said to have originated in a meeting of zealous Wesleyan office-bearers, one of whom, when the others were lamenting that they had no funds for hiring teachers, said, "Let's do it ourselves." *

The Stockport school, to which reference has thus been made, deserves a more extended notice. It was formed in 1784 on a broad and liberal basis, and was conducted by a committee under the patronage of the clergy, and the ministers of different congregations. The rules published November 11th, 1784, declared that "the town should be divided into six parts; that there should be at least one school in each part; that two subscribers should visit each school, and report to the committee; that the scholars should attend from nine to twelve in the forenoon, and from one to the hour of worship in the afternoon, when their teachers should conduct them to church or chapel, and then return to

* Report on Census, 1851, Education, p. 78.

school again until six o'clock. The teachers to be paid one shilling and sixpence per day, and that the children of Protestant Dissenters should, if possible, have masters of their own persuasion, and choose their own mode of catechising."

For a few years this plan succeeded, and much good was done; but by degrees the attention of some of the visitors relaxed, and many of the teachers appeared rather to continue their services for the purpose of securing the trifling emolument to which they were thereby entitled than from zeal to promote the object of the institution. In one of the schools thus established some of the teachers offered their services gratis, and gradually the admission of gratuitous teachers became a fundamental principle. The flourishing state of this school beyond the rest rendered a greater supply of books requisite, added to which an increase of rent, with other expenses, occasioned a demand beyond its proportion of the public subscription. These circumstances led to the formation of this school into a separate institution independent of the rest, agreeing with them in the general object,—the mode of instruction, the books in use, and the subjects admitted. In the year 1794, a separate committee published a report, entitling the institution, by way of distinction, *The Methodists' Sunday School*; most of its promoters and active supporters being of that denomination. That report stated the number of scholars to be 695. Year by year witnessed large additions of scholars and teachers; and on June 15th, 1805, the foundation stone of *The Stockport Sunday School* was laid. The building cost nearly

£6,000 in its erection, and was designed to accommodate 5,000 scholars, being 132 feet in length, and 57 feet in width. The ground floor and first story are each divided into 12 rooms; the second story is fitted up for assembling the whole of the children for public worship, or on other occasions; having two tiers of windows, and a gallery on each side extending about half the length of the building. In order to aid both the hearing and sight in this long room, the floor rises in an inclined plane about half way. There is also an orchestra with an organ behind the pulpit.* The report for 1859 states the number of scholars belonging to this, the largest Sunday school in the world, to be 3,781, and teachers, 435.

Mr. Raikes was permitted by Divine Providence to witness the extension of the benefits of Sunday school instruction to an extent far beyond anything he could have contemplated, his life having been preserved until April 5th, 1811, when he died in his native city of Gloucester, without any previous indisposition, and in his seventy-sixth year. He was buried in the church of St. Mary de Crypt, where the following tablet is erected to his memory:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
ROBERT RAIKES, ESQ.,
LATE OF THIS CITY,
FOUNDER OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS,
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE
APRIL 5TH, 1811, AGED SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS.

“When the ear heard him, then it blessed him, and when the eye saw him it gave witness to him. Because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.”—*Job* xxix, 11, 12, 13.

* Sunday School Repository, 1831—pp. 75, 84, 147—150.

Although so large a measure of success had attended the efforts made to extend the benefits of Sunday-school instruction throughout the country, it is remarkable that before Mr. Raikes went to his rest, the schools established in the city of Gloucester became entirely extinct. But it so happened, in the providence of God, about the year 1810, that six young men, impressed with the necessity and value of such institutions, banded themselves together, and resolved, in the strength of the Almighty, that they would revive the good work there. They applied to their minister for leave to do so. "No," he said, "the children will make too much noise." They then applied to the trustees of the chapel. "No," they said, "the children will soil the place, so that we cannot let you have it." They applied to the members of the church to rally round them. "No," they said, "you will find no children, no teachers, and no money to pay expenses." But these six young men, intent upon their work, were not to be thus discouraged. Accordingly they met around a post, at the corner of a lane, within twenty yards of the spot where Hooper was martyred, and there, taking each other by the hand, they solemnly resolved that, come what would, Sunday schools should be re-established in the city of Gloucester. Accordingly they entered into a subscription amongst themselves, and although all the money they could raise was fifteen shillings, with that they set to work, and formed the first school, with unpaid teachers, in that locality. Five of these young men have long since gone to their reward, the sixth still survives in the person of the Rev. John Adey, pastor of the Congregational Church, Bexley

Heath, Kent. That illustrious lady, the late Countess of Huntingdon, appreciated the value of these institutions, for, by her will, and prior to the re-establishment of Sunday schools in Gloucester, she provided that the premises adjoining the chapel there, should be devoted to the purposes of a Sunday school, if ever the zeal and love of the members of the church meeting in that chapel should lead to its formation.

CHAPTER V.

Joseph Lancaster—The British and Foreign School Society—Dr. Bell—The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church—The Religious Tract Society.

THE narrative contained in the preceding chapter would be imperfect if reference were not made to the interest excited on the subject of education generally, as a result of Mr. Raikes' efforts. The principal agencies for the education of the poorer classes at that period were what are called Charity schools, in which elementary instruction was given to a few children, who were clothed uniformly. These institutions did but little for the masses of the people, and could exert but very little influence. Popular education may be said to be almost entirely the creation of the present century. The records and the recollections which describe society so recently as fifty years ago, bear testimony to a state of ignorance and immorality so dense and general that if any member of the present generation could be suddenly transported to that earlier period, he would probably be scarcely able, notwithstanding many abiding landmarks, to believe himself in England, and would certainly regard the change which half a century has witnessed in the manners of the people as but little short of the miraculous.

Comparison is scarcely possible between the groups of gambling, swearing children—no unfavourable example of young England then—whom Raikes of Gloucester, in 1781, with difficulty collected in the first Sunday school, and any single class of the 2,400,000 scholars who now gather with alacrity and even with affection round their 318,000 teachers.

The *Popular Day School* epoch dates from 1796, when the youthful Quaker, Joseph Lancaster, began in his father's home in Southwark to instruct the children of the poor. Enthusiastic in his calling, and benevolent to rashness in his disposition, he assumed towards his scholars more the character of guardian than of master; easily remitting to the poorer children even the scanty pittance charged, and often furnishing with food the most distressed. No wonder that his scholars multiplied with great rapidity: they numbered 90 ere he was eighteen years old, and afterwards came pouring in upon him "like flocks of sheep," till in 1798 they reached as many as 1,000. In his perplexity how to provide sufficient teachers, he, according to his friends, invented, or, according to his enemies, derived from Dr. Bell, the plan of teaching younger children by the elder. This, the *monitorial* plan, attracted much attention; its simplicity and economy procured for it extensive favour. Lancaster absorbed in the idea of educating all the youth of Britain on this system, lectured through the land with great success—obtained the patronage of royalty—established schools—and raised considerable funds. But he was not the man to guide the movement he had originated; ardent, visionary, destitute of

worldly prudence, the very qualities which made him so successful as a teacher, and a missionary in the cause of education, rendered him incapable as an administrator. His affairs became embarrassed; he himself was tossed about through varied troubles, passing from a prison to prosperity, and then again reduced to bankruptcy, until, in 1818, he departed for America, where, after twenty years of suffering, brightened by some intervals of prosperity, but none of prudence, his life was terminated in 1838, by an accident in the streets of New York. Ten years before he quitted England, the development of his system was committed into abler hands, the prominent result of which proceeding was the foundation, in 1808, of "The Lancasterian Institution, for promoting the education of the children of the Poor," but which, a few years afterwards, received its present designation of "THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN SCHOOL SOCIETY."

In 1792, six years before the monitors of Lancaster began their labours, the experiment of juvenile instructors was successfully commenced in India, where Dr. Bell, then superintendent of the Military Orphan School, Madras, unable to induce the usher there to teach the younger children to write the alphabet in sand, was led to supersede him by a boy of eight years old, whose services proved so efficient, that the doctor generalizing from this instance, and considering the plan to be of almost universal application, ardently developed his idea; and on his return to England in 1796, urged warmly the adoption of his system as the most effectual means of rapidly extending popular instruction. Andrew Bell was the very opposite of Joseph Lancaster, in all, except

a common enthusiasm for instruction on the "mutual" or "monitorial" system. A Scotchman (the son of a barber at St. Andrews,) his career was just as much distinguished by invariable prudence, as was Lancaster's by constant though benevolent improvidence. On leaving college in 1774, at the age of twenty-one, Bell went to America, and spent his next five years as a tutor in Virginia, whence, in 1781, he returned to England, having suffered shipwreck on his passage. He now took orders in the English church, and became the minister of the Episcopal chapel at Leith. Applying for a Doctor's degree in Divinity, he received instead, from the University of St. Andrews, one in Medicine. In 1787 he sailed for India, where he was appointed chaplain to five or six regiments. On the foundation of the Military Orphan Asylum, he became its honorary superintendent, and it was in this capacity that he made his experiment in "mutual instruction." The result of this experiment he published after his return to England and made strenuous efforts to procure the general adoption of his scheme. In 1801 he became rector of Swanage, Dorsetshire; in 1808 the master of Sherbourne Hospital; in 1818 a prebendary of Hereford Cathedral; and subsequently, one of Westminster. He died in 1832, bequeathing his large fortune of £120,000 principally to the Educational Institutions of his native country. It is, however, in connexion with the NATIONAL SOCIETY that Dr. Bell is chiefly known. The Lancasterian schools have always been established on an unsectarian basis, no peculiar religious tenets being inculcated; the Bible, "without note or comment," being the only

religious school book. Early in the history of these schools this plan appeared to many churchmen unsatisfactory, the distinctive doctrines of the Church of England being thus unrepresented; and a scheme was formed to organize, according to the new method, exclusively Church schools. This led to the establishment in 1811 of the NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING THE EDUCATION OF THE POOR IN THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.*

The extension of education amongst the people thus commenced by the establishment of Sunday schools, and aided by the efforts of Lancaster and Bell, led in the providence of God to the formation of one of those catholic and useful institutions which arose about the commencement of the present century, and have proved so great a blessing. The institution thus referred to was THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY, which, from a humble commencement, has attained a position of commanding influence. In one of its early addresses it is stated, that "thousands who would have remained grossly illiterate, having through the medium of Sunday schools, been enabled to read, it is an object of growing importance widely to diffuse such publications as are calculated to make that ability an unquestionable privilege." † In a subsequent publication, the Committee stated, that "it became necessary to provide for the exercise of that growing ability which children were rapidly acquiring, to lead their minds to subjects calculated to please and

* These sketches of Lancaster and Bell are taken from Mr. Horace Mann's very interesting and instructive report on the Census of 1851; Education, pp. 15-17.

† Evangelical Magazine, July, 1799, p. 307.

to purify them, and thus endeavour to convert providential advantages into spiritual blessings.”* The Rev. George Burder, then minister of a congregation at Coventry, was the individual upon whom God bestowed the honour of suggesting the formation of this Society. As we have already seen with the commencement of the Sunday-school system, so in the present instance, the publication of tracts of a moral or religious character was not a new idea, but no systematic effort had been made for a continued publication or extended distribution until the formation of this institution, which has now for so many years been such an eminent blessing not only to this country but to the world, having gone on from year to year enlarging its efforts, and increasing its usefulness. It was at Surrey Chapel, on the 8th May, 1799, before the preaching of a sermon for the London Missionary Society, by the Rev. J. Finlay, of Paisley, that Mr. Burder mentioned the subject to the Rev. Rowland Hill, the minister of the chapel, who warmly approved the design. The attendance of ministers in the adjoining school room, was requested after the service. It was then agreed to meet the following morning, at seven o'clock, at St. Paul's Coffee House, St. Paul's Church-yard. About forty persons there breakfasted together; among whom were the late Thomas Wilson, Esq., of Highbury, who presided; the Rev. Joseph Hughes, of Battersea, who offered the first prayer to God for his blessing on the deliberations of the meeting, and the Rev. Rowland Hill. The Society was then established, and a Committee appointed to consider the rules that

* Origin and Progress of the Society, 1803, p. 6.

would be necessary for its regulation. On the next morning an adjourned meeting was held at the same time and place, at which Mr. Hill presided; when the proposed rules were brought up and adopted, and a Committee and Officers appointed for the first year; Mr. Hughes becoming the secretary.

CHAPTER VI.

*Rev. Rowland Hill—Opening of the first Sunday School
in London—Mr. Thomas Cranfield.*

MR. HILL, to whom reference has thus been made, was the sixth son of Sir Rowland Hill, Bart., of Hawkestone, Shropshire. This good man received the first rudiments of knowledge at the grammar school of Shrewsbury, and at an early age became the subject of religious impressions, through reading Dr. Watts' Hymns for Children, presented to him by a lady. These impressions were afterwards strengthened by hearing a sermon of Bishop Beveridge's read by his brother Richard. It was his privilege to have a brother and sister who were very anxious for his spiritual welfare; they often talked to him on religious subjects, prayed to God on his behalf, placed in his way books suitable for him to read, and corresponded with him when he went from home. His education was continued at Eton school, and here his serious impressions increased, until about the age of eighteen when his heart was fully given to God. This was evidenced by his efforts to benefit his fellow scholars. At the close of the year 1764, he entered as a pensioner at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he afterwards became a fellow commoner. Here he became acquainted with the Rev. John Berridge, of Everton, and the Rev.

George Whitefield, by whose counsel and example he was cheered and encouraged in his efforts to do good to the inmates of the jail and workhouse, as well as by his visits to the sick and dying. He did not neglect his studies, but by early rising, and careful improvement of his time, became a diligent and successful student—taking the degrees of Bachelor and Master of Arts, and leaving Cambridge with the esteem of those who knew him. He had, however, to bear the displeasure of his parents, who did not approve of his undertaking duties which they thought belonged exclusively to the clergymen of the Established Church. He had not confined himself strictly to the rules of that church, and when he sought for ordination, met with no less than six refusals. He was at length ordained Deacon by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, in the year 1773, and accepted a curacy of £40 a year, in the parish of Kingston, near Taunton, in Somersetshire. He afterwards removed to London, and preached with great acceptance and success in the Tabernacle, and Tottenham Court Road Chapel, which had been erected by the Rev. George Whitefield. Like that distinguished evangelist he spent his time mostly in itinerating, and, as a clergyman, found access to the pulpits of many churches. His catholic spirit made it a matter of indifference to him where he preached the gospel—in church, or chapel, or in the open air; but he found it desirable to have a settled residence, and a congregation over which he might especially preside. In the year 1780, Mr. Hill felt a strong wish to introduce the Gospel into the south of London, and on the 24th June, 1782, he laid the first

stone of Surrey Chapel, on which occasion he preached from *Isaiah* xxviii, 16. The building, which cost more than £5,000, and will seat about 2,500 persons, was opened for Divine worship, June 8, 1783, when Mr. Hill preached from 1st *Corinthians* i, 23. Under his auspices the first Sunday school in the metropolis was established. There are no records in existence to show the exact time of its opening, but it was probably about 1784, for in 1827, at a meeting of the old scholars who had been educated in the school, an elderly female stated that her first serious impressions were received in the school about forty-two years previous to that period. The children were first collected in the chapel, and afterwards in the school-house adjoining, of which we have already spoken, where they were instructed by paid teachers and superintendents for nearly twenty years, but under this system there was but little prosperity. There was the want of that generous and hallowed feeling which is produced by the disinterested labour of instructors, who are constrained by the love of Christ freely to give what they have freely received. At length, here, as elsewhere, Christian men and women came forth freely to undertake the work, which has ever since been carried on with great success.* The establishment of the school at Surrey Chapel was followed by the opening of a second at Hoxton by Mr. Kemp, and gradually the system spread through the metropolis.

One of the most active and successful agents in this work was a man in humble life. Thomas Cranfield, the son of a baker in Southwark, but who was brought up

* Memoir of the Rev. Rowland Hill, M.A., by William Jones.

to the business of a tailor, enlisted in the 39th regiment of foot, in August, 1777, and proceeded to Gibraltar, where he continued until its celebrated siege in 1782. On his return to England in 1783, he was induced by his father to hear the Rev. W. Romaine, whose instructions were blessed to his conversion, which was followed by that of his wife. He resumed his business, but had much difficulty in obtaining the means of supporting his family. He, however, devoted himself to the service of his Saviour, with an extraordinary energy and with a perseverance which accompanied him through life. About the latter end of 1791, Mr. Cranfield opened a Sunday school in his own house at Kingsland, and was assisted in the work by a Mr. Gould, while his wife instructed the girls. The number of children soon amounted to 60; and his room being too small, he removed the school to the factory, a building which he had hired near Kingsland Turnpike. He then left the school in the hands of some Christian friends, and proceeded to Stoke Newington, where he opened another school, which he put into the hands of others, and established a school at Hornsey. He had been assisted in his efforts by pecuniary assistance from Mr. Joshua Reyner, who held for many years the office of treasurer to the Religious Tract Society, and by Mr. James Robert Burchett, a proctor in Doctors' Commons, and a member of the Surrey Chapel congregation. In 1797, Mr. Burchett, at the suggestion of Mr. Cranfield, wrote and published a tract, entitled "Palm Sunday." Of this tract 1,000 copies were printed, and on the morning of Palm Sunday, 1797, the two friends met at Shoreditch

Church, for the purpose of commencing the circulation of these tracts: Mr. Burchett took the round towards Hornsey, and Mr. Cranfield that towards Whitechapel. Mr. Cranfield returned through Thames Street, and crossing London Bridge, proceeded to Rotherhithe. He was induced by the scenes of depravity which presented themselves to his notice, to form the resolution of opening a Sunday school, and in the middle of the week, hired a room in Adam-street, and issued a circular, informing the inhabitants that a school would be commenced on the following Sabbath for gratuitous instruction. On Easter Sunday, accordingly, Mr. Cranfield began the work of instruction, when upwards of twenty scholars attended. At this time he had three children, and it will illustrate his indomitable energy, as well as that of his wife, to state that, as he could not obtain any other assistant, she attended the school with him every Sabbath, though with an infant at her breast—Mr. Cranfield carried another child in his arms, and the third was left at home with a female servant. They dined in the school-room, and returned home in the afternoon to tea. The number of scholars soon increased to 100, and Mr. Cranfield obtained permission to conduct them to the Rev. John Townsend's chapel to public worship. Having obtained assistance in the carrying on the school from some members of that congregation, he, in December, 1797, opened another school in a brick-maker's house, near the High Cross, Tottenham. At this place were several youths of most abandoned character, and he calculated upon receiving much annoyance from them; but, on the contrary, they were

among the earliest who applied for admission. Some of them, as soon as they began to perceive the benefits of instruction, formed the plan of meeting at each other's houses after the labours of the day, for the purpose of learning to read; and to facilitate their progress, obtained the assistance of the boys in the Bible Class, for which they each allowed one penny per week. Four of these ringleaders in wickedness were subsequently converted to God.

When the charge of the schools at Rotherhithe and Tottenham was undertaken by Christian friends residing there, the active mind of Mr. Cranfield sought for another sphere of labour in Kent-street, Southwark. He therefore took an opportunity of reconnoitering this stronghold of iniquity, and found it inhabited by the lowest of the low, and the vilest of the vile. He conferred with his friends as to what should be done, and unpromising as the prospect appeared, it was determined to attempt to benefit the young portion of this degraded population. Mr. Cranfield hired a room at No. 124, at a rental of three shillings a week, and on the first Sunday in August, 1798, the school was opened. The children attended in considerable numbers, and after he and his friends had instructed them for some time, he ventured to take them to public worship, at a chapel in the neighbourhood, but it was with the greatest difficulty he could keep them in order. So novel was the scene to them, and so rude and uncultivated were they, that when the service was over, and they had got into the street again, they gave three cheers for the minister. The opposition which Mr. Cranfield and his friends encountered in this

district was dreadful. Every species of insult was heaped upon them; they were pelted with filth of all descriptions, and dirty water was frequently thrown out of the windows upon their heads. His two friends retired from this unpromising field of labour, but his wife again became his assistant, although she had to travel three miles from their home at Hoxton, leading two children, while her husband carried a third. In the spring of 1799, Mr. Cranfield finding the work too much for himself and wife, sought in various quarters for aid, but without success. As a last resource, he went to his friend, Mr. Burchett, who brought him the help he required.* An apparently fortuitous circumstance had on that very day directed Mr. Burchett's attention to the subject of Sunday schools. He had been with Mr. Hugh Beams, of the Stock Exchange, to Surrey Chapel, where Mr. Hill, who had recently visited Scotland, mentioned the great good which he had found effected there by these institutions, and made a powerful appeal to his congregation, to go and imitate their Scottish brethren. Mr. Burchett's ardent mind immediately caught the idea, and began to consider how it might be best accomplished. Mr. Beams offered the use of his rooms, and remembering that whatever we do should be done with all our might, they agreed to open a Sunday school the next Lord's day. It was while they were thus engaged that Mr. Cranfield came in to make his application to Mr. Burchett for help. On his entering the room, Mr. Burchett exclaimed, "I am glad to see you; we have just been contriving a plan

* "The Useful Christian," a Memoir of Thomas Cranfield.

to open a Sunday school, but I recollect you have one already in Kent-street, perhaps we had better endeavour to enlarge your border." Messrs. Burchett and Beams visited Mr. Cranfield the following Sunday, and found him labouring alone with forty children. They undertook to provide additional teachers, and Mr. Cranfield promised that scholars should not be wanting. The condition of other parts of the Borough of Southwark then excited attention, and schools were successively opened in the Mint, Gravel-lane, and Garden-row, St. George's-fields. The Mint was found to be a locality worse, if possible, than Kent-street. There a room was hired at £4 per annum, and the school opened on Sunday, June 16, 1799, with 40 scholars. The children appeared in a most wretched condition; few of them wearing shoes, and scarcely more than two or three having covering to their heads. Similar difficulties to those experienced in Kent-street were met with, but Mr. Burchett, who superintended the school for eight years, aided by Thomas Cranfield and others, persevered in his efforts, and this school is still continued in a new building erected in the year 1854, in Harem-place, Mint.*

These schools may be considered as the precursors of what have since been called "Ragged Schools," in the formation and carrying on of which John Pounds, of St. Mary-street, Portsmouth (who, while earning an honest subsistence by mending shoes, was also school-master gratuitously to some hundreds of children of his poor neighbours); the Rev. Dr. Guthrie, of Edinburgh;

* Ragged School Magazine, 1860, p. 243, 244.

Sheriff Watson, of Aberdeen; "the Poor Tinker" of Westminster; and "the Poor Chimney Sweep," of Windsor, have been so useful. In April, 1844, the Ragged School Union was formed under the presidency of Lord Ashley, M.P. (now Earl Shaftesbury), and has conferred real and vast blessings on the lowest classes of our youthful population.

Mr. Burchett had made himself responsible for all expenses, but when Mr. Hill returned to town in the autumn, he was informed of what had been done, and his patronage solicited. He immediately said, "Since you have undertaken to provide teachers and children, I will find the requisite money." He recommended that a junction should be formed with the school at Surrey Chapel, and the whole was denominated "The Southwark Sunday School Society." Mr. Burchett was not content with the services which his counsel and his purse rendered to the Society, but he was also for many years a zealous teacher in any of the schools where his labours were most wanted. At the time of his death, in 1810, there were eight schools, containing nearly 2,000 children.* At March, 1860, the Society had under its care 12 schools, comprising 411 teachers and 4,384 scholars.

* "Memoir of the Rev. Rowland Hill, M.A.," by William Jones.

CHAPTER VII.

*Introduction of the Sunday School into Scotland.
Opposition of the Civil and Ecclesiastical Authorities.*

THE reference made to Mr. Hill's visit to Scotland, and its important results, naturally lead to some account of what had there so much excited his interest. In that country family teaching existed to a large extent many years previously to the introduction of Sabbath schools. It was the custom, when a young man came to his minister and desired to be married, that he underwent an examination as to his qualifications to act as the head of a family; and if it was found that he was not properly qualified, the minister delayed the ceremony! It was also the custom in Scotland for the ministers to have periodical examinations—that is to say, they went through their congregations once a year, calling together the families in a particular district, and catechizing them, men, women, and children. This custom gave a certain stimulus to family education. As early as the year 1756, a Presbyterian minister started a Sabbath school in his own house, which was attended by thirty or forty children. This school he maintained for a period of not less than fifty years, and it has continued unbroken to the present day. But after all these statements, it cannot be doubted that the Sabbath school, in Scotland,

as it now exists, sprang from the effort of Robert Raikes.* In the year 1797, a number of pious persons, of various denominations in Edinburgh, and its neighbourhood, who had been meeting for some time monthly, for the purpose of praying for the revival of religion at home and the spread of the Gospel abroad, thought that some active exertions to promote the important object for which they had associated should accompany their prayers. Their attention was directed to the state and character of the rising generation, and a society was formed by them, under the title of the "Edinburgh Gratis Sabbath School Society," the sole object of which should be to promote the religious instruction of youth, by erecting, supporting, and conducting Sabbath evening schools in Edinburgh and its neighbourhood, in which schools the children should be taught the leading and most important doctrines of the Scriptures, and not the peculiarities of any denomination of Christians. It was agreed that the schools be conducted by gratuitous teachers, and the first school was opened in Portsburgh, in March, 1797. The Committee reported in 1812, that they had then 44 schools under their care, attended by 2,200 children.† The establishment of Sunday schools in the North of Scotland was met by some opposition. In the year 1798, two young Englishmen, Messrs. Coles and Page, were students at King's College, Aberdeen. They were Baptists, and men of fervent piety. The state of spiritual death in which they found the people around them, moved their

* Report of the Proceedings of the General Sunday School Convention, p. 29.

† Sunday School Repository, 1813. p. 125.

hearts and led them to attempt the formation of Sunday schools. They found a few godly men prepared to sympathise and co-operate with them. One of these wrote on the 25th of April, 1798, to John Morison, of Millseat, and father of the late Rev. Dr. Morison, of Brompton. "Each of them (Messrs. Coles and Page,) teaches a school, and the people tread upon one another to hear them. I went to hear one of them last Sunday evening, who teaches in St. Mary's Hill, below the East church. I think there were about one thousand people present. The schools are six in number, and very well attended. The children are rapidly advancing in knowledge. Had I not heard their answers, I should not have believed that persons so young could have been capable of acquiring such clear views of religious truth. These schools indeed appear to be among the most effectual means ever devised for training up a seed to do service to the Lord in their generation. At the first formation of the society for the support of the schools, several of the more liberal of the clergy attended, but they have almost all deserted us now, and are beginning to look upon us with a somewhat jealous eye. One of them said the other day that we were striking a blow at the very vitals of the Establishment by means of these schools." Mr. Morison was moved by these accounts to attempt something for the ignorant young of his own neighbourhood, and was aided by a little band of good men, who had the courage to join him in the novel proceeding. For several years the schools thus originated continued to prosper, and new ones were opened in the surrounding district. They became nearly as popular

an attraction as the parish church; the largest rooms in which they were held were crowded to excess; religious knowledge was diffused to a most happy and unheard of extent; they repressed the desecration of the Sabbath, and became in all respects important branches in that vast system of operation which was paving the way for happier times to the North of Scotland.

The apprehension of one of the clergy of the Scottish National Church, that these schools would be injurious to that establishment, appears to have been shared by his brethren to an extent which now appears ludicrous, and under its influence, the "Assembly" issued its "Pastoral Admonition," which condemned nothing in severer terms than the unauthorised instructions of lay teachers. Mr. Morison received a summons from the vestry clerk of the chapel of ease in his immediate vicinity, requiring him to appear before the Presbytery of Turriff, to give an account of the circumstances which had induced him to violate the statutes obligatory upon those who became teachers of religion, and by which they were compelled to obtain license, and to take certain oaths of allegiance to government. He however deemed the interference of the Presbytery impertinent and illegal, and in this opinion he was fully borne out by the decisions of the highest legal practitioners in the land. Not wishing however to show any feeling of disrespect or resentment, he made his appearance at the Presbytery, explained the nature of his proceedings at the Sunday schools; gently hinted that the neglect of the clergy had rendered them necessary; expressed his determination to persevere, and eventually apprised the

reverend body that he had sought legal advice, and was prepared to abide by whatever consequences might follow upon refusing to meet their wishes. From some parts of Aberdeenshire Sunday school teachers were marched into the city of Aberdeen, under the charge of constables, to account before the magistrates for their presumption. But after this interview with the Presbytery of Turriff, Mr. Morison had no further trouble on the subject of his Sunday school labours; and it is but justice to add, that most of the men who sat in judgment upon the case, lived long enough to feel convinced that all such attempts to put down Sunday schools were alike impolitic and unjustifiable.*

Similar opposition was met with in other parts of Scotland, both from the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. In the town of Paisley, in 1799, the sheriff of the county intimated to the Sabbath school teachers that he considered their meetings to be illegal, and demanded from them a sight of their books. He also required that every Sabbath school should obtain a license, and summoned the various teachers to take the oath of allegiance before the magistrates. In the small town of Lauder, in 1797, information against the Sabbath school was laid before the sheriff, who sent to the minister, and said, "You must let me see the books you use in the Sabbath school." The minister sent him the Bible and the Shorter Catechism, both of which the sheriff returned, with the remark, "I wish you God-speed." In a few years after this, Sabbath schools became popular. By-

* Service and Suffering : Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. John Morison, D.D., L.L.D.,

1860, pp. 98—102.

and-bye the magistrates were invited to open the schools, and see them examined. In one case, their authority was carried a little too far. In a small town of some 1,500 inhabitants, an order was issued that no scholar should be allowed to leave the house until the church bell rang, when all the doors were thrown open, and the children admitted to the school. Still it must have worked well, for we find that of the 1,500 inhabitants, there were 500, or one-third of the whole population in attendance at the schools.

The opposition from the ecclesiastical authorities was somewhat more formidable. At that time lay teaching in Scotland was almost altogether unknown, and the ecclesiastical courts declared that Sabbath-school teaching by laymen was not only an innovation, but was contrary to Presbyterianism. Some ministers stated from the pulpit that the conducting of a Sabbath school was a breach of the fourth commandment, and others, that if any parent sent his children to the Sabbath school, he should be cut off from the communion of the church. Such were the extreme measures taken by certain parties in Scotland at that time. The pious ministers and laymen, however, continued their labours, heedless of the anathemas which were fulminated against them, and the result is that all opposition has entirely ceased, and there are now none more cordially devoted to the Sabbath-school cause than ministers, many of whom have been educated in those institutions, and have been engaged as Sabbath-school teachers. And those very bodies which passed formal resolutions against Sabbath schools now have an annual statistical return of

their operations. It was well that this battle was fought and won; for it was not the cause of Sabbath schools only, but of all those lay agents who are now labouring so zealously and successfully in the country.*

* Report of the Proceedings of the General Sunday School Convention. pp. 30, 31.

CHAPTER VIII.

Introduction of the Sunday School into Wales—Consequent demand for copies of the Scriptures—Rev. Thomas Charles. Formation of British and Foreign Bible Society.

VERY early in the annals of the Sunday-school Society are recorded their desires and endeavours to carry the blessing into Ireland; it was not, however, effected to any considerable extent for more than twenty years afterwards. A similar attempt was made on behalf of Wales, which proved more successful. As the only obstacle was want of funds, a subscription was commenced in 1798 for the benefit of Sunday schools in Wales. In 1800 the funds were raised, and so rapid was the progress of the design in that Principality, that in three years 177 schools were raised, containing upwards of 8,000 scholars.* In 1787 a Sunday school was formed in connection with the Baptist church at Hengoed, in Glamorganshire, by Morgan John Rhys. This school was formed on the principle of teaching the Word of God and religious lessons only. But the person to whom the honour belongs of carrying out this work was the Rev. Thomas Charles, of Bala. In the course of his evangelistic efforts he had found ignorance as to religion prevailing to an extent

* Sunday School Jubilee, 1831, p. 23.

scarcely conceivable in a country professedly Christian. Having thus acquired a knowledge of the religious state of the community at large he felt anxious to provide some remedy. The plan he thought of was the establishment of circulating schools, moveable from one place to another at the end of nine or twelve months, or sometimes more. Some of the first teachers he taught himself. These schools were commenced in 1785, and increased, and supplied teachers for the Sunday schools, which were set on foot in 1789, and increased very rapidly, soon spreading over the whole country. Mr. Charles availed himself of every opportunity to encourage them. He had a peculiar talent for examining and catechising the children. He possessed in a high degree that tenderness and sympathy for them which were so conspicuous in our Saviour. His familiarity took away every restraint. His condescension and kindness engaged their tenderest feelings. He never seemed to enjoy himself so much as when he was surrounded by children, and they loved him as he loved them. What soon became very peculiar in these schools was the attendance of adults. Grown-up people attended as scholars. The children having been taught not only to read, but to understand in a measure the doctrines of the Gospel, those grown into maturity felt ashamed of their ignorance. Many parents came and submitted to be taught. From attending the examination of their children they were by degrees rendered anxious to be taught themselves. But what more especially produced this happy result was the constant practice of Mr. Charles of urging upon all of every age the duty of being able to

read the Word of God. In the pulpit, in examining the children, and in his conversation with the poor people he met with in his travels, this was the subject.*

In a letter written by Mr. Charles, in 1808, he gives some encouraging accounts of the progress of the Sunday schools in Wales, which had greatly increased, especially in South Wales; and of their beneficial influence he adds:

“We have also this year held associations of the different schools. They meet in some central place to be publicly catechised together. Three meetings of this nature have been held in North Wales, and three in South Wales. A subject is given to every school on which they are to be examined, and which they are to elucidate by repeating appropriate passages from the Sacred Writings. At the appointed time, generally a Sabbath day, the children of the different schools assemble, accompanied by their teachers. Some of the schools have walked ten miles by eight o’clock in the morning. The children being scattered in their different habitations over the country, for they dwell not together in hamlets as in England, they all meet at an assigned place, and at the appointed hour pray and sing a verse of a hymn together, and then march cheerfully and orderly for the place of their destination.

“As no place of worship is spacious enough to contain the immense concourse of people which attend on these occasions, we have been obliged to erect stages out of doors in the fields: a large one for the children, two or three schools at a time; another for the catechists,

* Brief History of the Life and Labours of the Rev. T. Charles, 1828, pp. 229—238.

opposite to that of the children, at fifteen or eighteen yards distant; the space between is for the assembled congregation to hear. We begin the work early in the morning, and the whole day is spent in these examinations. Every examination lasts three or four hours, and is generally concluded by an address to the children and the congregation. In the short intervals between the examinations, the children of each school are conducted by their teachers into a room engaged for the purpose to partake of a little refreshment, and at the appointed time they are reconducted to the place of meeting. We have had on these occasions from fifteen to twenty schools assembled together. Hitherto these associations have been most profitable. The previous preparation gives employment for two months to all the youths of both sexes, in which they engage with great eagerness and delight. The public examinations, we have every reason to conclude, are also very profitable to the hearers assembled. This is clear from their great attention, and the feelings produced by hearing the responses of the children. I have seen great meltings and tears among them. When the work of the day is over the children are reconducted by their teachers to their respective homes, or committed to the care of their parents.

“In my intercourse with the children I have met with many instances of uncommon quickness of intellect and strength of memory. I have met with more than one who at the age of three years would learn any common tune in a very short time; and others at the same age who would very soon commit to memory long chapters without any apparent difficulty. There is a little girl

only five and a half years old who can repeat distinctly above one hundred chapters, and goes on learning a chapter every week, besides the catechism, and searching the Scriptures for passages on different points in divinity. We have many blind people who treasure up the Word of God in their memory. One blind lad commits a whole chapter to memory by having it read over to him about four times. I have also met with many melancholy instances of very great ignorance among grown-up people, which has induced me to press them earnestly to attend the Sunday school."

Mr. Charles adds :

"No minister who wishes to see the success of his ministry, if he knew the satisfaction it would give himself, and the advantage it would be to others in preparing them for eternity, far beyond his mere preaching all his days, but would immediately set about teaching his people to read and catechising them." *

The efforts made by Mr. Charles to secure the attendance of adults at the Sunday school have resulted in impressing a peculiar character on the Welsh schools. In them the adults not unfrequently form the majority of the scholars present. In one school three persons upwards of seventy years of age were seen conning over their lessons, and standing up in the class with their grandchildren. One of those at that advanced age underwent a painful operation from which he recovered. During the confinement which it occasioned, he used to engage some of the Sunday scholars to visit him, and to go over with him the lessons they had been taught at

* Brief History of the Life and Labours of the Rev. T. Charles, 1828, pp. 241—244.

school, that his learning might not be hindered.* In a school at Bangor, at a very recent period, a class was seen every member of which wore spectacles. The class is often the scene of lively theological discussion between the scholars and the teacher, and one verse will frequently occupy the whole time of meeting. Sometimes the servant will be the teacher, while the employer willingly takes the position of a scholar.

Two years after the establishment of Sunday schools by Mr. Charles, a remarkable awakening as to religion took place, especially at Bala and its neighbourhood, which was instrumentally owing, in a great measure, according to all appearances, to these schools. In a letter, dated September, 1791, Mr. Charles says: "Here, at Bala, we have had a very great, powerful, and glorious out-pouring of the Spirit on the people in general, especially on children and young people. Little children, from six to twelve years of age, are affected, astonished, and overpowered." But a still more remarkable, extensive, and enduring event was brought about by the establishment of these schools. When the capacity of reading became more general, and a serious impression was made on the minds of the young people, Bibles were wanted. As early as the year 1787, two years after the commencement of the circulating schools already mentioned, Mr. Charles corresponded with the Rev. T. Scott about procuring Welsh Bibles for supplying the wants of his countrymen. Mr. Scott tried all means in his power, but eventually failed. The Sunday schools greatly increased the want, which was also rendered more urgent

* The Sunday School Jubilee, 1831, p. 24,

by the extraordinary revival in North Wales, to which we have adverted. The Rev. T. Jones, of Creaton, had noticed the want when on a visit to Wales, in 1791. It made such an impression on his mind that he corresponded much with Mr. Charles on the subject, and made strenuous efforts to get the necessity supplied. He made application to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, in 1792, to print an edition of 10,000 copies of the Welsh Bible, and offered security to pay for 5,000 as soon as printed. The proposal was reluctantly accepted, but afterwards declined, on the ground that such an edition was not wanted. Mr. Jones then interested his diocesan, Dr. Madan, the Bishop of Peterborough, in the object, whose influence succeeded, in 1796, in obtaining a resolution of the Board to print the number required. The edition was published in 1799, and liberally offered for sale at one half the cost price. It was no sooner published than sold, "though not one-fourth part of the country," according to Mr. Jones's account, "was supplied." * But neither the solicitation of Mr. Jones, nor the influence of the Bishop, nor the intercession of other parties, could induce the Society to issue another edition. They were, probably, deterred by the expense which the publication involved.† In the year 1802, Mr. Charles was walking in one of the streets of Bala, when he met a child who attended his ministry. He inquired if she could repeat the text from which he had preached on the preceding Sunday. Instead of giving a prompt reply, as she had been accustomed to do, she remained

* Brief History of the Life and Labours of the Rev. T. Charles, 1828, pp. 283—285.

† History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1816, pp. 6—14.

silent. "Can you tell me the text, my little girl," repeated Mr. Charles. The child wept, but was still silent. At length, she said, "The weather, sir, has been so bad that I could not get to read the Bible." This remark surprised the good man, and he exclaimed, "Could you not get to read the Bible! how was that?" The reason was soon ascertained—there was no copy to which she could gain access, either at her own home or among her friends, and she was accustomed to travel every week seven miles over the hills to a place where she could obtain a Welsh Bible, to read the chapter from which the minister took his text. But during that week, the cold and stormy weather had prevented her usual journey. This incident made a deep impression on the benevolent mind of Mr. Charles, and increased the anxiety he had long felt to secure for the Welsh a good supply of the Scriptures in their own tongue. In December of that year, he took his annual journey to London, intending to lay certain plans for securing his object before some charitable friends, particularly the Committee of the Religious Tract Society. The subject was much upon his mind, and while awake in bed, the idea of having a Bible Society in London, on a similar basis to the Religious Tract Society, occurred to him. He was so cheered by the thought that he instantly arose, and went out to consult some friends on the subject. The first person he met was Mr. Tarn, who was then on the Committee. They discussed the subject together for a considerable time, and at the next meeting of the Committee, on Tuesday, December the 7th, 1802, after the regular business was finished, Mr. Tarn

mentioned the particulars of his conversation with Mr. Charles, who fully unfolded his plans, and urged assistance in the attainment of an object which had long occupied his mind. On this occasion, the Rev. Matthew Wilks occupied the chair, and there were also present the Rev. Messrs. Steinkopff, Townsend, and Hughes, Messrs. Pellatt, Alers, (afterwards W. Alers Hankey,) Mackenzie, Goldsmith, Shrubsole, Preston, Freshfield, Reyner, Hamilton, Fowler, Sholter, and Tarn. At the moment when Mr. Charles was appealing for the Bible for Wales, it occurred to Mr. Hughes, "Surely a Society might be formed for the purpose, and if for Wales, why not also for the empire and the world?" He mentioned to the Committee that it appeared to him desirable to extend the plan suggested by Mr. Charles, so as to facilitate a general circulation of the Scriptures.* It does not belong to our design to detail the mode in which Mr. Hughes, in concurrence with the Committee, and as their official organ, developed and made public the idea thus suggested to his mind. The result was that on the 7th March, 1804, the BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY was fully established; and so eminently has the Divine blessing rested on its labours, that 47,989,579 copies of the Scriptures, in whole or in part, have been issued by its means, in 160 languages and dialects of the earth. Like the Religious Tract Society, by the exertions of whose Committee it had been originated, it was formed upon the Catholic principle of union amongst Christians of all denominations; and the Rev. Josiah Pratt, a clergyman of the Established

* The Jubilee Memorial of the Religious Tract Society, 1850, pp. 46—48.

Church, the Rev. Joseph Hughes, a Baptist minister, and the Rev. C. F. A. Steinkopff, of the German Lutheran Church, were appointed its secretaries.

A review of these events will show how the formation of the Sunday school led on to efforts for the improvement and extension of general education amongst the people; thus necessitating a supply of reading to meet the demand created by that education, and, above all, compelling the adoption of means for putting into the hands of the people of this and other lands the Holy Scriptures in all their purity and completeness.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. W. B. Gurney—Formation of the Sunday School Union—Mr. James Nisbet—Mr. Thomas Thompson.

WE now resume the narrative of the progress of the Sunday-school system in the Metropolis. Amongst those who devoted themselves to the gratuitous instruction of the rising generation at an early period, were found Mr. Joseph Fox, the intimate friend of Joseph Lancaster, and Mr. William Brodie Gurney. The latter gentleman was born at Stamford Hill, on the 27th of December, 1777. His grandfather, Thomas Gurney, was a man of considerable mechanical genius. When a youth he took a great interest in astrology, and for the sake of a work on that subject, he bought at a sale a lot of books labelled "Sundries." Among them was "Mason's Shorthand," a system which had fallen into disuse on account of its complexity. This book immediately engaged Mr. Gurney's enquiring mind. He soon learned the system, and simplified it to enable him to take down sermons. There still exists in the family a book of sermons taken by him at Ridgmount, in Bedfordshire, in 1732—33, while only about eighteen years of age. This acquisition had an important effect on the history of his family. Fifteen years afterwards he learned, from an advertisement, that the shorthand writer of the criminal court held in the Old Bailey, had

died, and that a successor was required. He applied for the office, gave proof of his qualification for it, and was elected. For thirty years he continued to discharge its duties, and was respected by all with whom he became officially connected. His leisure time he filled up with clock and watch-making, his original business.

In the year 1770, he was succeeded by his son Joseph. In his hands, after a few years, the business considerably increased. The frequency of courts-martial during the American war; the trial of Warren Hastings, and Horne Tooke; the Mutiny at the Nore, and enquiries connected with it; the question of the abolition of the Slave trade, on which evidence was taken at the bar of the House of Lords, all called for the exercise of his talent. Some of the speeches taken by him on these occasions, especially during the trial of Hastings, were delivered with a rapidity which it had been thought impossible to meet. A conversation between his Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence, afterwards King William the Fourth, and Joseph Gurney, affords an amusing instance of his Royal Highness's discrimination. One day during the enquiry into the Slave trade, the Duke asked Mr. Gurney for which side he attended. Mr. Gurney told him for the planters. "Oh!" he replied, "then I am mistaken. I really supposed you were an abolitionist. I thought you had an abolition face." Those who remember the countenance of William Brodie Gurney, and how readily it was excited by any tale of wrong, will appreciate his Royal Highness's suspicions, and conclude that the abolitionism of the father's face was inherited by his son.

During the first ten years of Mr. W. B. Gurney's life his family continued to reside at Stamford Hill. He himself relates the following incident. "In the course of the last two or three years that my father resided at Stamford Hill, I was occasionally sent by my mother to enquire after the health of Mr. Henshaw, a superannuated Independent minister, who resided at Kingsland, in the house of Mr. William Fox." Mr. Fox, of whom we have already spoken, was the founder of the Sunday School Society. "Frequently while I trundled my hoop, I took on my left arm a little basket with some jelly, or a little cake, refreshments which he (Mr. Henshaw) had not the means of purchasing, his income being very small; he having refused assistance which was generously offered him from Mr. Whitbread, and from Mr. Howard, both of whom felt a great esteem for him. On one of those occasions I found an elderly gentleman, whose figure I still bear in my mind, as well as his dress: a pepper and salt coat, a scarlet waistcoat, and lying by him a cocked hat. This was John Howard the philanthropist. This visit must have occurred in the year 1787." In the October of that year the family removed to Walworth, a village to the south of London, where Mr. Gurney received at first the instruction of Mr. Burnside, but was afterwards sent to school to a Mr. Freeman, who had been a Baptist minister, but had embraced Arian views, and ultimately sank into Unitarianism. The influence of Mr. Freeman's religious opinions was exceedingly injurious to Mr. Gurney's mind; but after leaving school, the sermons of Mr. Dore, the pastor of Maze Pond Chapel, Southwark, where his parents

attended, were made the means of leading him to right views of his own condition as a sinner in the sight of God, and of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners. He was baptized at Maze Pond, on August 1st, 1796, together with Miss Benham, whom he afterwards married.

Although his father's business had largely increased, it was an uncertain one, so that when he left school it became a grave question whether he should follow his father's profession. He, therefore, turned his thoughts in other directions; but ultimately his appointment, in conjunction with his father, as shorthand writer to the House of Lords decided his course. Thenceforth he gave himself to that profession.*

Before Mr. Gurney had publicly joined the Church of Christ his career of usefulness had begun. In the neighbourhood of his father's house at Walworth was a school which his mother had been instrumental in raising. The master was encouraged by the committee to open it on Sunday for religious instruction, and was rewarded with a penny a child for each Sunday up to the number of thirty. The result was, that the number was always thirty, a lad being sent out to fetch in one or two if it fell short; but it was never exceeded, except by accident. Mr. Joseph Fox and Mr. Gurney, with two friends, took charge of the school in 1796. In the following year Mr. Gurney became the secretary, and under the care of gratuitous teachers it increased to 180 children, for whose accommodation it became necessary to erect a new school-room, the funds for which were raised to a large extent by his own personal appeals.

* Baptist Magazine, 1855, pp. 529—532.

In 1801, Mr. Gurney, with the assistance of some young friends, began the Maze Pond Sunday school, the boys' school being for several years in Bermondsey-street, close to the outlet of Snowsfields; the girls' school was close to Weston-street. The boys' school comprehended some of the raggedest colts that were ever got together, but the change in their appearance within a year was surprising. The school at Walworth, though commenced five years previously, was never so bad as that called the "Maze Pond Sunday School," from the chapel it attended and which kept it up. Both the boys' and the girls' school were the means of spiritual good to some of the children.* The neighbouring church at Carter-lane, under Dr. Rippon's care caught the spirit, and large schools were speedily in operation there.†

It was natural that these teachers should seek to improve the quality of the instruction given to the young persons thus gathered together, and they were stimulated and guided in this by the interest which Mr. Gurney's sister took in the "Missionary Magazine," commenced in Edinburgh in the year 1796. That lady was a frequent contributor to the publication, and sometimes employed Mr. Gurney as her amanuensis. He was thus brought acquainted with the mode pursued in the schools of Scotland of catechising on the scriptures, and also with Elliott's "Scripture Catechism," and other works intended to aid beginners in adopting it. He introduced the plan into the Sunday school. Mr. Gurney was not aware that such a mode of instruction,

* Letter of Mr. Gurney in British Banner of May 2nd, 1855.

† Baptist Magazine, 1855, p. 594.

which is now happily so universal, had then been introduced into any school; but he found its adoption attended with the most beneficial results. While the minds of the scholars were imbued with the knowledge of the scriptures, they also contracted a habit of reading the sacred volume, which had its influence long after they left the school.

In the year 1802, Mr. William Marriott, who was engaged in conducting a Sunday school at Friar's Mount, Bethnal Green, was introduced to Mr. Gurney, who had then become connected with a society established at Walworth for opening schools in the neighbouring villages. They both found reason to lament the want of plan and order, and desired some means by which neglected districts might be supplied with schools, and young persons of suitable dispositions induced to undertake the work. On the removal of Mr. Gurney into London, early in 1803, his house became the place of meeting for several active Sunday-school teachers, amongst whom were Messrs. Beams, Burchett, Niven, Weare, &c.; and at one of these meetings the subject of inducing the teachers in London to unite for mutual encouragement and support, and with a view to the extension and improvement of Sunday schools, was made a matter of conversation; and its practicability and desirableness becoming apparent, it was determined to call a meeting to consider the subject more at large, and adopt measures for carrying it into execution. Accordingly, a numerous meeting was assembled on the 13th July, 1803, at Surrey Chapel School-rooms, where in 1799 the meeting had taken place, which resulted in

the formation of the Religious Tract Society, and the SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION was then established.

Mr. Marriott was appointed the Treasurer, Mr. Gurney the Secretary, and a Committee was also elected to carry out the objects of the Society. At the commemoration of the Jubilee of the Union in 1853, the only known survivors of the band who, animated by love to the Saviour, and to the souls of the young, thus met together and formed the Union, were Mr. Gurney, Mr. James Nisbet, and Mr. Thomas Thompson, all of whom have since entered into their rest. It was felt to be a pleasing reminiscence, and one which correctly marked the catholic character of the institution, that those three survivors should represent respectively three important sections of the Christian church. With Mr. Gurney's early history the reader has already become acquainted. Mr. Nisbet was born at Kelso, and in the early part of the year 1803, found himself on the 18th anniversary of his birth-day, a friendless youth in the metropolis. On the Sabbath he bent his way to the Scotch church in Swallow-street. The Scotch psalms were sung, prayer was offered, and a sermon preached by a venerable and affectionate pastor. When the service was ended, and he was introduced in the vestry to Dr. Nicholl, he felt himself no longer friendless. He was almost immediately installed as a Sunday-school teacher, and besides finding Christian companions, commenced that course of active usefulness which was never to intermit for more than fifty years.* Mr. Nisbet was anxious to discharge faithfully the duties of the office he

* Funeral Sermon, by Rev. James Hamilton, D.D., 1854,

had undertaken. He used to rise at four o'clock to study the chapters which had been appointed as the lessons for the next Sunday in the school, lest he should be asked a question by any scholar that he could not readily answer; aiding his own study by the careful perusal of Matthew Henry's Commentary.*

Mr. Thompson was a native of London, having been born 19th August, 1785, immediately under the sound of Bow Bells. His heart was early brought under the influence of divine truth, and that, by means rather singular. He was, when five or six years old, in the habit of going to a baker's shop, near his father's residence, to fetch the rolls for breakfast. The baker's man took notice of him, and the child spent much time in his company. To him Mr. Thompson owed the instruction which first led him to seek his eternal welfare. He often afterwards heard his early friend preach when, as the Rev. William Chapman, he became the estimable pastor of the Tabernacle, Greenwich, and predecessor of the Rev. Henry Lucy, formerly of Bristol. Thus commenced a long life of Christian usefulness, which continued until December 8th, 1865, on which day he had written his letters and sent them to the post, immediately after which he became indisposed, and Mrs. Thompson was called. He said to her—"There will be none of this in heaven with Jesus," kissed her, smiled sweetly, and the large and living heart stood still.†

The Committee of the Union, immediately upon their appointment, proceeded to prepare and publish a Plan

* Union Magazine, 1852, p. 347.

† Sunday School Teachers' Magazine, 1866, pp. 111, 112.

for the establishment and regulation of Sunday schools —A Catechism in verse, entitled *Milk for Babes*—and a select List of Scriptures, designed as a guide to teachers for a course of reading in Sunday schools. The two former of these publications were prepared by Messrs. Marriott and Gurney; the *Milk for Babes* by Mr. J. Neale; and Mr. John Heard, subsequently Alderman of Nottingham, who continued his interest in the cause of Sunday schools until his decease, which only just preceded that of Mr. Thompson, assisted in the preparation of the select List of Scriptures. The “*Youth’s Magazine*,” designed for the upper classes in Sunday schools, also originated in the Committee of the Union, but they did not feel it prudent to undertake the responsibility, as they had no funds to meet the loss, in case it should not succeed. It was therefore published at the risk of some members of the committee, who devoted the whole of the profits (about £4,000) to objects connected with the diffusion of scriptural truth, in which donations the Union has largely shared. This work has been eminently useful, but has of course no longer the extensive circulation which it obtained when no similar publication existed, and when 60 copies were purchased monthly by the scholars in one school.* At a recent period the Committee of the Sunday School Union have taken the charge of it, and in a greatly improved form it has now become one of the periodical publications of that Society.

Pursuant to one of the rules, a sermon was annually preached to the members of the Union: that in 1804 by the Rev. John Burder, at the City Road Chapel; and

* Sunday School Repository, 1831, p. 131.

that in 1805 by the late Dr. Bunting, in New Court Chapel, from *Nehemiah* vi, 3—"I am doing a great work." The latter excited great interest. It was printed, and went through three editions, the circulation of which was very beneficial. It was so clear and cogent that it produced immediate effect.

The following affords an interesting illustration:—

A gentleman travelling into the country on business, shortly after this sermon was printed, took one in his pocket. In a town he passed through, where there was no Sunday school, he called on a lady who, as he heard, laid herself out for usefulness, and suggested the importance of instituting one. Various difficulties were started, which he endeavoured to remove, and at parting put into her hands the printed sermon. He called for it by appointment in the afternoon, when she informed him that, after reading that sermon, she could no longer hesitate; that she had accordingly been round to several of her poor neighbours to invite their children to attend the next morning; and (opening the door into the room next to that in which they were sitting) she showed him that she had already furnished it with such forms as she could procure. A Sunday school was thus speedily established.

In adverting to the magnitude and importance of the Sunday-school teacher's work, Mr. Bunting referred to the advantage which Scotland had gained over all other parts of the British Empire from the attention which was there bestowed on early education, and the provision made for the wide and general diffusion of its benefits. In support of this statement he quoted some statistics,

contained in Howard's account of Lazarettos. The following anecdote may be added in confirmation. A minister was requested some years before this period, during his ministerial labours in Scotland, to distribute a parcel of religious books and tracts. He offered some to the servant of a family, in which he happened to be a visitor, but previously asked her whether she could read. "*Read, sir,*" she replied, with an air and tone of mingled surprise and indignation, "*Do you think I was brought up in England?*" *

* Sunday School Repository, 1853, p. 98.

CHAPTER X.

The extension of the Sunday School to America.

HAVING thus traced the beneficial results of the Sunday school, so far as this country was concerned, we will turn our eyes westward across the Atlantic to ascertain what effect had been produced by it on the American continent. As in England, single Sunday schools were in existence in various localities of that land as early as 1750 and 1760, but they never extended themselves, nor were reduced into a system until after the result of Mr. Raikes's efforts at Gloucester had been made known, and he is therefore universally acknowledged in America as the founder of Sunday schools. The Sunday-school idea, improved by the introduction of unpaid teachers, and with greater attention to its religious character, was developed in the United States by Francis Ashbury, the patriarch of American Methodism. He planted what may be called the first American Sunday school in Hanover County, Virginia, in 1786. In 1790 the Methodist Conference formally resolved on establishing Sunday schools for poor children, white and black.* It will be thus perceived that the Southern States took the lead in this movement, but they were speedily followed by the Northern ones. In the year 1791 a society was established at Philadelphia, under the

* Annual Report of the Methodist Episcopal Sunday School Union, 1858.

title of "The First-day or Sunday School Society." Those who united in the enterprise were of different denominations of Christians. Among them were several members of the Society of Friends, and the Right Rev. Bishop White, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, was its first President, and held the office till his decease. The schools established or aided by its funds were conducted by paid teachers, but the Society has had no school under its care since December, 1819. Its chief office at present is to take care of a small fund which has accumulated from legacies and subscriptions, and to distribute the income (about 300 dollars per annum) in appropriate donations of books to needy Sunday schools in Philadelphia and its environs.* About the year 1803 Mr. Divie Bethune, an active Christian philanthropist, visited England, and returned filled with the Sunday-school idea. In 1804 he opened one of the first Sunday schools in New York that had any permanence. Mrs. Graham described the movement in her diary as "a wonderful thing that young ladies, the first in station, in society, and accomplishments, should volunteer to teach the little orphans of God's providence," and she prays devoutly for a blessing upon them.

In the year 1810, the Committee of the Sunday School Union were solicited to grant assistance towards the carrying on of Sunday schools established in the West India Islands. At St. John's, Bermuda, a school had been established, containing eighty children, mostly blacks; at St. John's, Antigua, two schools, one containing 100, and the other 650 scholars. The Committee

* Popular Sketch of the Rise and Progress of Sunday Schools in the United States.

made grants of books to these schools; but finding their means inadequate to meet the demands which would thus come upon the funds, they induced the Sunday School Society to extend assistance to the colonies of this kingdom. As, however, the rules of that Institution confined their grants to copies of the Scriptures, and reading and spelling-books, the Committee of the Union found ample room for their liberality, which they have freely exercised. It is impossible to recall the early efforts made by the Moravian Brethren and the Methodists, for the religious instruction of the young in the island of Antigua, without rejoicing at the testimony afforded to its value. When by the emancipation act, slavery was exchanged for apprenticeship, the planters of Antigua were so well satisfied with their generally educated slaves, that they declared their willingness to set them wholly free; and the system of apprenticeship was never introduced into that island.

The example of the teachers of London in associating for mutual encouragement and support, was followed, in 1810, by the teachers of Nottingham and Hampshire; and since that time, similar Unions have been formed in various parts of this country, as well as in foreign lands, with the most beneficial results.

In addition to the efforts made by the Rev. T. Charles for the religious education of the young, he commenced, in the summer of 1811, schools for adults. In Bristol, the formation of the Bible Association exhibited to public view the deplorable situation of many adults who were unable to read the Scriptures, and were anxious to learn. A poor but pious and indefatigable man, named William

Smith, first felt deeply concerned for the situation of these ignorant adults, and communicated his sentiments to Mr. S. Prust; he was encouraged by the promise of assistance to commence his benevolent undertaking without any delay. Smith procured some rooms, and with the assistance of a few friends commenced an Adult school. Eleven men and ten women were admitted the first Sunday, and the number rapidly increased. In a short time a few friends met, and formed the "Bristol Society for instructing the Adult Poor to read the Holy Scriptures." In 1813 there were 8 schools for men, containing 147 scholars, and 8 for women, with 197 scholars.

A few extracts from the Report of the Society, then published, will prove the necessity for these schools, and the beneficial results attending them.

"I heard one of the scholars, who had learned at 85 years of age to read the Bible, say that she would not part with the little learning she had acquired, for as many guineas as there were leaves in her Bible, notwithstanding she ranked amongst the poorest of the poor. A converted Jew, who is upwards of 80 years of age, did not know, when he came into the school, a letter in the alphabet, but in two months he could read tolerably well a chapter in the New Testament. A young man about 20 years of age, who had some knowledge of the letters when he was admitted, but was not perfect in them, in four months was able to read a chapter well. A woman, 61 years of age, who did not know a single letter when she began, in two months could also read a chapter in the New Testament. A poor woman, wanting (to use

her own expression) 'only two years of a hundred,' goes daily to the boys' school, established in Manchester for one thousand and fifty children, to receive instruction from one of the monitors." *

The Committee of the Sunday School Union addressed a circular to several periodical publications, urging attention to the education of adults, and on the 2nd of March, 1814, a meeting was held in the Friends' Meeting House, Redcross Street, Borough, when a society was formed for the instruction of the adult poor of Southwark. Benjamin Shaw, Esq., M.P., who presided, was appointed President, and amongst those who addressed the meeting we find the names of Mr. Gurney and Mr. Lloyd.†

The progress of general education has happily diminished the necessity for such efforts, which have consequently gradually declined.

* Sunday School Repository, 1814, pp. 414, 415.

† Sunday School Repository, 1814, pp. 348—358,

CHAPTER XI.

Introduction of the Sunday School into Ireland.

It has already been mentioned that the early endeavours to introduce the Sunday-school system into Ireland were not very successful. As in great Britain, individual schools had been previously carried on.

About the year 1770, the Rev. Dr. Kennedy, curate of Bright parish, in the county of Down, was painfully struck with the total disregard of the Lord's day among the young people and children in some villages through which he had to pass in going to and from his duty at the church. His congregation was very small. A gentleman of the name of Henry, with his family, joined it, and with him Dr. Kennedy consulted by what means it could be improved. Having engaged a well-conducted and competent man in the capacity of parish clerk, they got boys and girls together on Sundays to practise psalmody. This made a little stir. In 1774, to singing was added exercise in reading the psalms and lessons for the day, which, being rumoured abroad, excited further attention. Ere two years had elapsed, the numbers had considerably increased. Those who came were desired to bring what Bibles and Testaments they could, in order to their being better instructed and examined in what they read. Then the children of other denominations were invited to share the advantages of the meeting.

And thus, by the year 1778, the gathering which had begun as a singing class a few years previously, had matured into a "school" held regularly every "Sunday" for an hour and a half before the morning service.

The good work went on and prospered until the latter part of the year 1785, when Dr. Kennedy heard of the proceedings in England for the establishment of Sunday schools. His own was, in reality, a Sunday school already. But he and the gentleman with whom he advised agreed that its plan should be made more comprehensive and systematic, according to the English method. During the winter they spread information on the general subject, and obtained funds among persons they interested in the project. The necessary preliminaries being arranged, the Bright Sunday school was opened on the first Sunday in May, 1786, with Robert Henry, Esq., as its superintendent; members of his family, and other respectable individuals, as teachers; and honest Thomas Turr, the parish clerk, ready to help in it as he might be able or occasion require.

Thomas Chambers was entered as a scholar on the first Sunday in June, 1786, just a month only from its commencement. Being able to read well, he was placed in the head class. The number of scholars in August afterwards amounted to 343, including Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Roman Catholics, collected from within a district nine miles in length, and differing in ages from four years to upwards of twenty. The senior classes, besides learning the Scriptures, committed to memory portions of Watts's Hymns. A pair of shoe-buckles for boys, and pieces of ribbon for girls,

were rewards for diligence. The most deserving were favoured with a tract, and had their names inscribed on a roll and posted in the church: the first thus honoured was a Roman Catholic girl. Several years ago, Chambers sent up to the Sunday School Society's committee in Dublin a pocket Bible, which Dr. Kennedy gave him within twelve months from the opening of the school, for having sometimes acted usefully as a teacher. Not unnaturally, Chambers counted the book very precious, and the more so as he considered it to be, which probably it was, the first Bible ever given in an Irish Sunday school. As a book, neither its paper, print, nor binding will compare with those of Bibles easily procured now; but then it cost what to the poor was a serious sum. The hold which that copy of the Scriptures had on the good man's affections may be known by what he wrote on the paper in which he wrapped it for transmission:—"God speed thy journey, my dear Bible! Farewell.—T. C."

Chambers died in 1862, a patriarch of more than fourscore and ten, in the possession of his faculties to the last, and trusting in the one Saviour. Though a plain man in humble life, his letters contain touches of the graphic and even of the poetic. Dr. Kennedy's removal to another diocese, in 1791, interfered with the working of the school. Through his absence, and consequent changes in the management of parish affairs, it lingered dwindling for some time, and became almost extinct. However, it afterwards revived.

Passing on to about twenty years later, a gentleman walking along in a midland town of Ireland, one Sunday

morning, met a Methodist lady, who told him that she was hurrying to the opening of a Sunday school, pursuant to the directions of the Conference. He accompanied her to the place. There they found a crowd of children in utter confusion, without any provision for putting them in order. He describes that, in those days, even the Protestant children were "no better than heathens." By degrees, something like arrangement was made. The gentleman himself undertook the superintendence. Several tradesmen—a grocer, a chandler, a shoemaker, and a weaver—engaged to teach the boys, and the wives or daughters of some of them, did the same for the girls. But there were no books such as the work required, except one, the Belfast Spelling Book, and from that they had to *cut out* bad words before it could safely be given to the scholars for use. Even of that a supply could not be had without sending to Dublin, for in those days it was not a singular case that a country town in Ireland should be without a bookseller's shop.

That school was only one of many which were formed in consequence of resolutions passed by the Methodist Conference in 1805, desiring that Sunday schools should be established in every "circuit" in Ireland. The Rev. Adam Averell, for many years before his death president of the Primitive Wesleyan Conference, went preaching through the four provinces with the view of promoting the system, he having witnessed its working in England when there on conference business. Funds were wanting beyond what Ireland was prepared to furnish. The Sunday School Society in London was applied to, but

could not afford help to Ireland. In this difficulty, Joseph Butterworth, Esq., afterwards Treasurer and President of the Sunday School Union, whose name yet lives in many memories as forward among the Christian philanthropists of his generation, offered to ask aid for Sunday schools in Ireland from English Christians.

As the system spread in the country, need for assistance, particularly in books adapted to the population, increased. The desirableness of having a local organization for obtaining and administering aid, also became growingly apparent. Indeed, it could not be supposed that a person in Mr. Butterworth's position, and with his occupations, could give the time and work required as an English collecting agent.

The gentleman already spoken of as concerned in the Sunday school in a midland town, had attentively watched its progress. He also carefully reflected on the probable effects of such schools being generally established. Nothing could be more settled and gratifying than were his convictions of the utility and importance of the system, for improving the social condition of the people as well as their more sacred interests. He threw himself into its support and furtherance with his whole heart.

This gentleman dining one day with an Englishman who had come to reside in Dublin, the Rev. Mr. Averell, and a friend who was connected with a Sunday school in Bethnal Green, London, being of the circle, the table-talk turned upon Sunday schools, and on the difficulty of obtaining help for those in Ireland. In the course of conversation, he is reported to have said, on the impulse

of the moment, "As the English Society can't help us, why should we not have one of our own for Ireland?" The suggestion took instant hold of every one in the company; they were all of one mind for the project. He then asked Mr. Averell, "What would you give to the society if it were formed?" "Ten guineas donation at once, and two guineas a year subscription," was Mr. Averell's reply.

Forthwith, the gentleman who had started the idea took further and decided action upon it. In November, 1809, a meeting of leading Christian men was held in the banking-house of the Messrs. La Touche, in Dublin. Then and there the "Hibernian Sunday School Society" was formed. At the same meeting, the co-operation of James Diggles La Touche, Esq., was secured as secretary, of whom it is next to impossible to speak too highly for his talents and attainments, his genuine and catholic Christian piety, his business capabilities, and his untiring devotedness, during seventeen years, to the interests of the society. By his death, after a week's illness, in November, 1826, the Irish Sunday-school enterprise sustained an irreparable bereavement, and Ireland lost one of the purest, brightest, and most precious gems in her crown.*

The objects of the institution to be carried out were, "procuring and disseminating the most approved plans of conducting Sunday schools, supplying them with spelling-books and copies of the Sacred Scriptures at reduced prices, and contributing to defray the expenses of such schools, where necessary, without, however,

* Report of the Proceedings at the General Sunday School Convention, pp. 13—15.

interfering with their internal regulations; and as to religious instruction, confining themselves solely to the Sacred Scriptures, or extracts therefrom." In 1811, the Committee reported that the number of schools deriving aid from the funds of the Society had been 42, containing 5,172 scholars, and amongst them was one in the Townland of Broughmore, distant about four miles from Lisburn. This school was established by "Henry Richy, an industrious weaver, who, observing with pity the ragged boys of the neighbourhood increasing both in numbers and vice, and becoming particularly offensive to him in their total neglect of the Sabbath, conceived the plan of a Sunday school, in order to reduce them to some state of order. He intimated his wishes to as many of the neighbourhood as were inclined to listen to him without ridicule, and flattered himself in the hope of having secured the assistance of a few. Accordingly, early in the year 1809, he collected in a barn as many children as could conveniently be arranged within. After a few months his coadjutors had entirely left him to his own exertions; their excuses were various, but the sovereign objection was the confinement during the greater part of Sunday, a day on which they were accustomed to indulge themselves, free from restraint, after the toils of the week. Poor Richy, although necessitated to be industrious at his loom, for the support of a family, felt no discouragement at the falling off. He redoubled his endeavours, and towards the end of the year many of his pupils had made a considerable progress in spelling. Now his difficulties began to press upon him. In consequence of the poverty of the parents

of the children, books could not be procured in order to teach them to read; however, he continued to beg, borrow, and purchase from his little fund (reluctantly subscribed to him by a few of the neighbouring farmers) what were barely sufficient. The barn which had only one aperture of any kind, and that the door, offered him but scanty light, which was the more to be regretted, as the books he had collected together being almost all of different letters, necessarily compelled him to attend to each child individually, and therefore demanded from him not only the greater labour, but also a greater proportion of time. He however struggled with these difficulties until desired by the proprietor to remove himself to make way for the grain. With much entreaty, he at last prevailed on an old woman to let him for Sundays a spare room; in this he continued his school, which now diminished for want of accommodation. His perseverance carried him through the winter, when he was again admitted to the barn. On my visiting him, about a week since, I found his school to consist of 70 regularly attending scholars, 30 of whom read tolerably well, 20 repeat the Church Catechism from memory with accuracy, and the remainder spell words from two to eight syllables. His eldest son, impressed by the example of so good a father, was assiduously employed in teaching to write as many as could procure materials; an old door, supported by two barrels, supplied the place of a table, and the fragments of an old loom, ingeniously arranged on stones, offered them a seat. His hours of teaching at present are, during the summer time from nine to twelve and from two to four; in the winter from

nine to three. The Townland is so situated, that no place of worship is nearer than three or four miles, which induced him in winter to trespass on the hours of divine worship of the Established Church, with a view to keep the children from idling and committing mischief. He complains much of the scarcity of books, and even these much defaced. The old woman refuses to admit the scholars this winter unless better paid; she expects a guinea per annum, an expense he cannot meet. A few forms and a table are also in the list of his wants."

This application will afford a specimen of the necessities the Society was called on to supply. The Sunday School Union granted it 1,000 spelling-books, and 10,000 alphabets, and also supplied 5,000 more spelling-books at a reduced price; but it soon obtained liberal support, and has been extensively useful, under the title of the SUNDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY FOR IRELAND. Its Fifty-first Report states that there were then in connection with the Society, 2,700 schools, containing 233,930 scholars, and 21,302 teachers.

CHAPTER XII.

First Public Meeting of the Sunday School Union.

THE Sunday School Union having quietly pursued its course for a period of nearly nine years, it was, in the year 1812, thought by the Committee that the time had arrived for making its proceedings more public. Accordingly, it was determined to invite the teachers and friends of Sunday schools to a public breakfast, on the morning of Wednesday, May 13th, at the New London Tavern, Cheapside. Breakfast was provided, at seven o'clock, for two hundred: and the meeting excited great interest. Mr. Marriott, the treasurer, presided; and after the Rev. Richard Watson had implored the Divine blessing, a report of the proceedings of the Union, from its formation, was read. From that report it appeared that the following had been its only publications:—

A Plan for the Establishment and Regulation of Sunday Schools; of which one edition had been printed.

An Introduction to Reading, part the first; of which 150,000 copies had been printed.

The same, in a series of Lessons for Collective Teaching.

An Introduction to Reading, part the second; of which 85,000 copies had been printed.

A Catechism in verse, entitled "Milk for Babes," of which 38,000 copies had been printed.

A Select List of Scriptures, designed as a Guide to Teachers for a Course of Reading in Sunday Schools.

The first resolution submitted to the meeting was moved by Mr. T. H. Horne, author of the "Introduction to the Critical Study of the Holy Scriptures." He was then engaged in literary pursuits, and for some years held an important situation in the British Museum. So struck was Dr. Howley, Bishop of London, with Mr. Horne's work, that he offered him ordination, which took place in 1819. In 1833, Dr. Howley, who had become Archbishop of Canterbury, presented him to the rectory of the united parishes of St. Edmund-the-King and St. Nicholas Acons, Lombard-street, which he held until his death, on January 27th, 1862. The resolution was seconded by the Rev. Legh Richmond, the author of "The Dairyman's Daughter." There were some sentiments contained in the address of this devoted minister of Christ which deserve to be recorded, as showing the principles upon which the Union was founded, and upon which its successive committees had endeavoured to carry on its operations. He said, "I confess it to be no small inducement to me, in delivering my sentiments on this occasion, that I see the word 'Union' in the title of the Society. Union, in all those points wherein we can conscientiously and consistently agree, appears to be the great secret, now at length happily discovered, for bringing into effect, and into prosperous co-operation, the hearts, the hands, and all the combined energies of the men of God. I feel

particularly thankful that a plan has been discovered by which ministers and other Christians may labour together with so much affectionate exertion, and that, frequently, with prospects of the greatest success, in the first of national objects, the introduction of our British youth to the knowledge of the religion of Christ. My dear brethren, *unite earnestly in the work*. May the Sunday School Union prove a union of affection, and a union of opinions, as far as you can possibly unite, (and God forbid that we should endeavour to find out how much we can possibly differ.) May there be a union of those general principles which shall make the Church of God strong and united in the exertions of its most enlightened and zealous members. It is my firm belief, or I would never wish to address a meeting, consisting, as this does, of persons of different denominations—that the happiest event of the century that has now commenced, is the growing disposition among Christians of various names and denominations to unite in great and glorious undertakings. I have heard the arguments of the prejudiced on this question; I have read the observations of the worldly wise upon it; but the more I have heard and read them, the more have I seen that the foolishness, as it may be called, of Christian charity, is confounding the policy of the wise men of this world. There must be some circumstances take place, as fore-runners of the latter day glory; there must be something come to pass, by which the divisions, heart-burnings, and jealousies, which have too long prevailed among us, may be brought to a close. A miracle to effect this we have no reason to expect; it must advance gradually; nor do

I think there is anything fanciful in believing that that work is now accomplishing; not by the nominal, but by the real union of hearts, engaged in so many grand and beneficial undertakings. I have happily experienced some of the most delightful moments of my life in the enjoyment of that brotherly communication with fellow Christians of other denominations, which, though at a former period of my life I thought highly desirable, yet I confess I did not expect to see so speedily brought into frequent and cordial existence. I can speak for myself, and I am sure I can speak in the name of many of my brethren in the Church of England, in testimony of the pleasure which we have derived from finding that those who had been accustomed to think themselves at a great distance from each other, are at length, through the influence of a sort of spiritual central attraction, if I may call it so, brought to love one another, and almost to wonder that they feel so affectionately and so nearly allied. We compromise no principles of conscientious attachment to our own views of church doctrine or discipline ourselves; neither do we expect this from others. But there is something in union for Christian and benevolent purposes which acts like a talisman on the heart, and elicits its best and noblest affections, that they may be consecrated at the foot of the cross of Christ. By this means, a thousand half explained or ill explained sources of difference and disputation among us gradually lose their former importance, and we are mutually becoming willing to consign them to oblivion."

The year 1814 was remarkable for events intimately connected with the spread of the Sunday-school system.

Mr. Prust, of Bristol, who, as we have seen, had interested himself in the establishment of adult schools, sent to Mr. Divie Bethune, of New York, a narrative, prepared by Dr. Pole, of their history and progress. This proved the means of awakening great attention to the subject. Mr. Bethune, when on a visit to Philadelphia in January, 1815, mentioned it to a young lady, who procured the insertion of several extracts from Dr. Pole's work in the "Religious Remembrancer," a weekly paper of that city, which excited general interest, and led to the establishment of several such schools, one of them being in the jail. In her letter to Mr. Bethune, she says, "I never undertook anything that afforded such heart-felt joy: our precious little establishment goes on delightfully. The first member was a pious soul, 52 years of age; she comes with her spectacles on, and seems as if she would devour the book. She never fails giving us a blessing, and assures us she has long been praying that the Lord would open some way that she might learn to read the Bible. She looks at your little book with delight, and often says, 'O, this blessed book—I know I shall learn to read in this book.' I feel as if her prayers were as good as an host. We have eleven scholars, two added mostly of an evening; and after the first lesson they advance wonderfully." *

In March, 1816, there were eight adult schools existing in the city of Philadelphia, and many grown persons were admitted into the Sunday schools, which had become general throughout the city.†

* Sunday School Repository, 1815, pp. 189, 190.

† Sunday School Repository, 1816, p. 204,

The effect of Mr. Prust's communications did not, however, end with the establishment of Adult Sunday Schools. Mr. Bethune inserted in a daily paper, published in the city of New York, one of the letters sent him, and Mrs. Bethune lent the different publications relative to Sunday schools she had received to a number of their friends, hoping that their perusal would awaken an interest in these institutions. After waiting, however, for some weeks, she conversed with several ladies upon the subject, who agreed to unite with her in the formation of a "Female Sunday School Union." In order to carry out this design, they called a meeting of the female members of all denominations, some hundreds of whom met on the 24th January, 1816, in the lecture-room of one of the churches. A clergyman opened the meeting with prayer, and then withdrew. Mrs. Bethune was invited to preside, and stated the purpose for which their attendance had been requested—the great need of such an institution in a city, where numbers of one sex were training for the gallows and State prison, and of the other for prostitution. She likewise noticed the great want of religious instruction in their small schools, and urged that the parents of the scholars not having time to teach them, would probably gladly avail themselves of Sunday schools if within their reach. Mrs. Bethune read extracts from the report of the Sunday School Union, the second report of the Hibernian Sunday School Society, two letters from Mr. Charles of Bala, and Mr. Prust's two letters to Mr. Bethune, and invited the co-operation of the ladies of different denominations, who were willing to collect scholars and subscriptions. A

committee of one or two from each denomination was appointed to prepare a constitution and general rules for the Union and schools under their care, to be laid before a meeting, to be held on January 31st, in the lecture-rooms of Wall Street Church. * The attendance proved so numerous, that it became necessary to adjourn to the church. The form of a constitution for the society, and rules for the schools, under the designation of "The Female Union Society" for the promotion of Sunday schools, as prepared by the committee were read and approved of, and the following ladies chosen to preside over the institution:—Mrs. Bethune, first directress; Mrs. Mumford, second directress; Mrs. Bowering, treasurer; Miss Mumford, secretary. The first quarterly meeting of the newly formed society was held on April 17th, in the lecture-room of the Second Presbyterian Church, when, in addition to the officers, there were present 16 superintendents and more than 200 teachers. The first directress congratulated the assembly on the abundant success which had attended their labours since the last meeting, and the secretary read the reports presented by the superintendents of 16 schools belonging to the following denominations—Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, Reformed Dutch, General Assembly Presbyterian, Associate Reformed Presbyterian. It appeared that the total number of scholars of all ages and complexions, from 6 to 67 years of age, in the different schools, was 2,194. Before the meeting separated, a committee of one or two ladies from each denomination was appointed to visit the schools, as the duties were

* Sunday School Repository, 1816, p. 276.

found too arduous to be properly fulfilled by the directresses.*

In the summer of 1817 a depository for the sale of Sunday-school books was opened at 112, William Street, and Sunday-school books were published under the patronage of this Female Union; and, as an evidence of its efficiency, "they expended 9,000 dollars in twelve years in paper and printing." †

The establishment and successful progress of this institution bear unmistakeable testimony to the zeal, energy, and prudence of Mrs. Bethune, by whom it was originated. Her useful life was preserved to a very lengthened period, and she continued to teach a Sunday-school class every Sunday, until compelled by infirmity to desist, when she was at least 84 years old, making the term of her active service about 53 years. The last use she made of her pen, was to write to her pastor, the Rev. Dr. James W. Alexander, a note, in which she spoke of Sunday-school children. ‡

It would seem that the promptness and decision of Mrs. Bethune and her coadjutors were not lost on their fellow-labourers of the other sex. In a letter, written by Mr. Bethune, dated February 4th, 1816, after giving an account of the meetings we have described, and their results, and stating, that "next Sunday, I believe, was appointed for the commencement of the work of teaching; the zeal of three of the congregation led them to begin this day. Mrs. B. visited these three schools, which, with a school of black adults, taught by my family,

* Sunday School Repository, 1816, pp. 409, 410.

† Sunday School World. No. 2, p. 18.

‡ Sunday School World,

made up 136 scholars. I presume the number next Lord's day will amount to 1,000 in all the schools." He adds, "the gentlemen are mustering their number, to follow the example of the ladies, and to take charge of the adults and children of their own sex." In a subsequent letter, dated February 10th, Mr. Bethune says, "The gentlemen of this city are now busily engaged, and a general meeting is called on Monday next, for the organization of a society for the instruction of children and adults." * Thus originated the "New York Sunday School Union," which has for so many years pursued its labours with increasing usefulness and success. Before the institutions, whose formation we have thus recorded, came into existence, there were but four Sunday schools in the city of New York.† In the following year the Female Union was able to report 25 schools, with 3,000 scholars, taught by 340 ladies, while the New York Union had under its care 34 schools, containing 3,500 scholars, with 300 male teachers. ‡ At a subsequent period, the distinction between the two societies ceased to exist, and the New York Union now comprises 216 schools, containing 70,000 scholars, with a band of teachers numbering 5,250. The forty-fifth annual report of the Union, however, reports, that there are 80,000 young persons of the lowest classes still not receiving the benefits of Sunday-school instruction, and that it would require at least 150 mission schools, in addition to those now in operation, with some nine or ten thousand teachers, aided by competent superintendents, and other officers,

* Sunday School Repository, 1816, p. 276.

† Sunday School World. No. 2, p. 18.

‡ Sunday School Repository, 1817, pp. 213, 217, 466.

were these destitute ones gathered into rooms suitable for their instruction.

While these events were occurring in the New World, an opportunity had been afforded for the introduction of the Sunday-school system into France. The restoration of peace on the Continent of Europe, and the intercourse with England thus allowed, probably drew the attention of several French Protestant ministers to this subject, and the Committee of the Sunday School Union, in 1815, made a grant to the Rev. Francis Martin, to assist him in the formation of a school in Bordeaux. In their report of the following year, the Committee reported, "that their hopes as to the establishment of Sunday schools in France are for the present beclouded;" but the school established at Bordeaux proved the forerunner of many others; and the report of 1823 recorded the opening of a Sunday school at the Protestant church at Paris, by the Rev. M. Monod, who had attended the previous annual meeting of the Union. Two hundred scholars were in attendance, and among them were the sons and daughters of some of the most wealthy and influential Protestants of the capital, who wished to give their offspring the religious advantages of the school, and at the same time to present an example to the other classes of Protestants attending the same church.

In 1827 it was reported to the Sunday School Union that a Committee for the encouragement of Sunday schools amongst Protestants had been established at Paris, of which the Baron de Stael was President, and £20, with copies of the Union publications, were voted in aid of their efforts.

These schools, however, were not conducted in the same manner as those in England and America. They were rather juvenile congregations than schools, and in them the pastor conveyed religious instruction in a simpler form than it was presented from the pulpit. The advantage of employing Christian men and women as teachers was, however, soon perceived; the schools increased in number, and the greater intercourse with England led to a more intimate acquaintance with the English system. At length, and in the year 1852, the Paris Sunday School Society was formed upon the principles of the Sunday School Union, and applied itself with diligence and success to the work of extending and improving Sunday schools throughout France. A fraternal intercourse has been maintained between the two institutions, and deputations to their annual meetings have been exchanged, and the one school established, with the assistance of the Union, in Bordeaux, in the year 1815, has now multiplied into the large number of 744 schools, 55 of which are in Paris and its suburbs. The following extract from the report of Mr. Reed, who attended the anniversary of the Society in 1863, gives a lively sketch of the interesting scene presented by the gathering of the Protestant scholars of that city.

“The morning of the 16th of April witnessed an assemblage of children such as could never been shown in London, except in the area of St. Paul’s Cathedral, simply because in London there is no amphitheatre equal to that of the Cirque Napoleon of Paris. The scene was truly imposing and impressive. As your delegate

entered, the whole body of 4,000 children were singing, to our favourite tune 'Joyfully,' their hymn

Dieu nous appelle; avançons tous joyeux,
Vers le pays des esprits bien heureux.

'To look at that vast throng, to remember the day when it was difficult to find one school in Paris, to find the platform raised in the centre of the Cirque crowded with pastors from all parts of France, all actively engaged in the work, to witness the harmony of the brethren, and to feel the contagion of their loving enthusiasm, brought a sense of gratitude to the heart which could not better find expression than in the utterance of those words, 'What hath God wrought?'

"It became the duty of the English delegate to address this interesting assembly, and he did so by the assistance of the pastors Paumier and Fisch, who translated his speech. He received the assurance of both children and pastors of the hearty good will and *entente cordiale* of the Protestant Christians of Paris. The addresses delivered during the day were full of life and energy. Messrs. Pressensé, Verrue, and J. P. Cook, together with the President, M. Montandon, were the principal speakers, and upon the platform, among other visitors, were the Rev. R. Ashton, of London, and Mr. Martin, of Dublin. The singing of the children was admirable. From the very ceiling the clear voices of the little ones came down and mingled with the deeper tones of the elder occupants of the tiers of seats below. No organ was used. The time was excellent, and all was done under the order of one precentor. The good management of the singing was only equalled by the admirable precision of the

movements of the groups of children when leaving the assembly. The French are used to military exactitude, and the conduct of the little ones was in close imitation of marching order. Hence, probably 6,000 people dispersed in a few minutes, and without the slightest approach to crushing or crowding. The impression upon the people of Paris must be good. The thing is new. The files of children passing through the streets attracted curiosity. The people see that the system is increasing, and many are beginning to believe that these children after all afford the promise of social order and improved manners, to say nothing of higher religious influences. The police who had charge of the building were so interested in the proceedings of the day, that they voluntarily offered the fees to which they were entitled, to the funds of the Union."

CHAPTER XIII.

Efforts for the promotion of General Education.

WE may here appropriately halt in our narrative of the progress of the Sunday school, and give some information as to the efforts which now began to be made for the promotion of the general education of the people. Lord Brougham has the high honour of being foremost in this good work. Committees of the House of Commons had made inquiries into the state of mendicity in the Metropolis and its immediate neighbourhood, and also as to the education of the lower orders of the Metropolis. In the course of these enquiries, several witnesses were examined as to the operations and influence of Sunday schools. Mr. Butterworth, who had then entered Parliament, and was a member of the Mendicity Committee, gave the following testimony:

“I would beg to state to the Committee, that from much observation I am satisfied that Sunday schools, if properly conducted, are of essential importance to the lower classes of society. I have had occasion to inspect several Sunday schools for some years past, and I have particularly observed the children, who at first came to the schools dirty and ragged, in the course of a few months have become clean and neat in their persons; and their behaviour, from my own observation, and the

report of a great number of teachers, has rapidly improved: I allude to those schools where the teachers are gratuitous, as I find that no persons who are paid do the work half so well as those who do it from motives of real benevolence. . A large school which I frequently visit in Drury Lane, which has upwards of 600 children, has produced many instances of great mental and moral improvement amongst the lower classes of society. At this time there are no less than twenty chimney-sweep boys in that school, who, in consequence of coming there, have their persons well cleaned every week, and their apparel kept in decent order; I have the names of their masters. Some of the employers of those chimney-sweep boys are so well satisfied with the school, that they will take no child but what shall regularly attend it, as they find it greatly improves their morals and behaviour. In another school in Hinde Street, Marylebone, there are eleven chimney-sweep boys. Some time ago, when I happened to be the visitor for the day, a woman attended to return thanks for the education her daughter had received in Drury Lane School; I inquired whether her child had received any particular benefit by the instruction in the school. She said she had indeed received much good. And I believe the woman's words were, she should ever have reason to bless God that her child had come to that school; that before her girl attended there, her husband was a profligate, disorderly man, spent most of his time and money at the public-house, and she and her daughter were reduced to the most abject poverty, and almost starved; that one Sunday afternoon the father had been swearing very much,

and was somewhat in liquor; the girl reproved the father, and told him, from what she had heard at school, she was sure it was very wicked to say such words. The father made no particular reply, but on the Monday morning his wife was surprised to see him go out and procure food for breakfast; and from that time he became a sober, industrious man. Some weeks afterwards she ventured to ask him the cause of the change of his character. His reply was, that the words of Mary made a strong impression upon his mind, and he was determined to lead a new course of life. This was twelve months prior to the child being taken out of the school, and his character had become thoroughly confirmed and established. He is now a virtuous man, and an excellent husband. She added, that they now had their lodgings well furnished, and that they lived very comfortably; and her dress and appearance fully confirmed her testimony. I have made particular inquiry of a great number of teachers who act gratuitously in Sunday schools, and they are uniformly of opinion that Sunday-school instruction has a great tendency to prevent mendicity in the lower classes of society. One fact I beg to mention, of Henry Haidy, who, when admitted a scholar at Drury Lane School, was a common street beggar. He continued to attend very regularly for about eight years, during which time he discontinued his former degrading habits. On leaving the school he was rewarded, according to the custom, with a Bible, and obtained a situation at a tobacconist's, to serve behind the counter. His brother was also a scholar; afterwards became a gratuitous teacher in the same school; obtained

a situation, and, up to the period of his quitting London, bore an excellent character."

Other witnesses gave equally decided evidence as to the benefits conferred by Sunday schools. Mr. William Hale said, with respect to their influence in the district of Spitalfields, the seat of the silk manufacture—"There has been a great alteration in the moral condition of Spitalfields since their establishment. The character of the poor of Spitalfields is very different from what it was thirty or forty years ago. You never hear of any attempt to riot there. I know at one time there were individuals sent up from Nottingham, with a view to effect something like what they were doing there, and that they have been more than once excited to riot during the last war, and yet that they were very quiet. Great care is taken of their mental and moral improvement. And I believe no instance is to be found where so multitudinous a poor congregate together in so small a space, with so little inconvenience to their neighbours." *

Amongst the witnesses examined before the Committee, on the education of the lower orders of the Metropolis, were Messrs. Althans and Lloyd, who gave full details of the state of Sunday-school instruction in the Metropolis.† Mr. William Hargrave, a member of the Society of Friends, and connected with a society entitled The Juvenile Benevolent Society, was also examined as to the number of poor children uneducated in the North East district of the Metropolis, many of whom were prevented attending schools, and especially Sunday

* Sunday School Repository, 1816, pp. 217, 218.

† Sunday School Repository, 1816, p. 359, &c.

schools, for want of suitable clothing. The society he represented was designed to assist in removing the difficulty which existed in procuring the attendance of many children, especially at Sunday schools, from this cause. For this purpose, the Society provided a cheap kind of clothing, with which they clothed their poor children—a boy at the expense of 8s., and a girl for 10s. The boy's dress consisted of a leather cap—a pinafore made of a brown kind of very strong sheeting, extending from the neck down to the feet, and covering the arms—with good, strong shoes. The girls were each provided with a bonnet and ribbon—a pinafore, made of gingham—and a pair of shoes. Mr. Hargrave stated that the Society had lost but little of the clothing, in proportion to the number of children it had clothed, owing to the precautions the Committee had adopted. The materials of the clothing were of little value to sell; it was stamped on the inside with permanent ink, "J. B. S. Charity," and the clothing was not given to the children, but merely lent them on the Saturday, to be returned to the depôt on the Monday following. When any omission took place, the parties were visited by a member of the Committee, to ascertain the cause. The Society did not, however, confine themselves entirely to the loan of clothing. When a child had been under the care of the institution some time, and appeared worthy, a gift of clothing was made, and the child was placed in a day school. This gift was made publicly before the rest of the children, who were always summoned together once a week, that they might be induced to qualify themselves for similar gifts. In order to ascertain that the children

had attended the schools to which they belonged, tin tickets were supplied to the teachers, who gave them to the children, for production at the weekly meeting. In the course of Mr. Hargrave's examination, he stated a fact, to which many other testimonies could be added, that, generally, children learnt as much on the Sunday as they would have done if placed in a National or British school all the other days of the week. The explanation was to be found in the almost individual attention which the children received in a Sunday school, from the small number placed under the care of each teacher.*

This Society was carried on with much energy and success for several years. Its general meetings, which were held at the London Tavern, Bishopsgate Street, were numerous attended, and were generally presided over by Mr. Brougham, to whom every institution connected with the education of the people immediately commended itself.

The earliest statistics by which the progress of education may be measured, are contained in the Parliamentary returns of 1818. According to them, there were then in England and Wales 19,230 day schools, containing 674,883 scholars, being 1 in 17·25 of the population, and 5,463 Sunday schools, containing 477,225 scholars, or 1 in 24·40 of the population.

This year, 1818, witnessed an alteration in the operations of the Sunday School Union, which has exercised an important influence on the institutions for whose improvement and extension it was established. We

* Sunday School Repository, 1816, pp. 377, &c.

have seen that hitherto the publications of the Union had been but few. They had been sold by a bookseller on behalf of the Committee; in the first instance by Mr. Kent, of High Holborn, exclusively; and subsequently by him in conjunction with Mr. Hamilton, of Paternoster Row. The Committee had long desired to have the means of increasing the circulation of their own publications, and to be enabled to provide for Sunday schools at reduced prices, such other publications as might appear suitable. They at length entered into an agreement with Mr. John Offor, bookseller, 44, Newgate Street, for the use of a part of his shop, and there opened a Depository for the sale of approved publications adapted for Sunday schools. The catalogue then prepared, comprised,—first, school books, lessons, &c.; secondly, books for Sunday-school teachers; and it was proposed to extend it, so as to embrace a collection of select reward books read and approved by the committee.

The following were some of the advantages contemplated by this measure:—furnishing Sunday schools with lists and prices of such books, &c., as they might be constantly in the habit of using; supplying Sunday School Unions, and through them, Sunday schools, with needful books, &c., at the lowest possible prices; selecting suitable books read and approved by the committee, to the exclusion of those that were objectionable; saving time and trouble, by the whole order being completed at one place, and immediately despatched to its destination; establishing a centre of communication, of influence, and of information, for the whole Metropolis, the country at large, and, if possible, for the whole world. A sub-

committee was appointed to manage the affairs of the Depository, in order to ensure, as far as possible, the sale and publication of suitable works only. It was agreed that the approval of three members of the committee should be had before a book could be placed on the catalogue for sale; and that the approval of six members and the secretaries should be obtained to any work which was to be published by the Union.

The anticipations which were indulged as to this endeavour to extend the usefulness of the Union, might at that time appear visionary, but its subsequent history will show that they have been fully realized.

The attention of the Committee of the Sunday School Union was occupied in the ensuing year, 1820, by a proposal submitted to them for publishing a Penny Magazine for Children. They decided in favour of the undertaking, but hesitated in carrying it out. They thus allowed Mr. William Gover, a teacher in the south of London, to have the honour of commencing that series of cheap religious publications for the young, which has now been so greatly enlarged, and by which such great blessings have been, and still are, conferred on the rising population of this and other lands. The Religious Tract Society quickly perceived the importance of the idea, and commenced the publication of their valuable penny periodical, "The Child's Companion," which rendered unnecessary Mr. Gover's, which had been continued for two years. Thus the "Youth's Magazine," and the Magazines for Children, really originated in the Committee of the Sunday School Union, although few are now acquainted with the source from which these

blessings proceeded. If these works have become more useful, in consequence of their having been brought into existence by those whose time was not so much occupied as that of the Committee of the Union, there will be no cause for regret; but it is desirable that it should be known from whence they sprang.

The attention which had been directed, by the investigations of the committee appointed by the House of Commons, to the state of education and morals amongst the lower classes of society, led to various efforts for the removal of the ignorance and vice which were so generally prevalent. The patronage of "The Juvenile Benevolent Society for clothing and promoting the education of destitute children" was undertaken by His Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex, and its title altered to that of "The Educational Clothing Society." The fourth report of the committee in 1819 stated that they had clothed and placed in different schools 1,621 children since the formation of the society, in addition to which the committee sent 862 poor children to school during the last year, who did not require clothing.*

The benefits arising from this society did not terminate with its direct efforts. The Southwark Sunday School Society also undertook a canvass of the district in which their schools were situated, the result of which led the committee to inform the public "that in Southwark there are upwards of *two thousand* children entirely destitute of instruction, the whole of whom are in want of most articles of clothing, and the greater part are in such distress as to be unfit objects to appear before the

* Sunday School Repository, 1819, p. 133.

public, while the parents of both classes are so poor as to be unable to provide them with decent apparel." In one case the committee discovered a widow and six children in a most deplorable and destitute condition. Some of the children, the mother said, had formerly attended a Sunday school and derived much benefit, but could attend no longer for want of clothes. One of the children was employed by a neighbour as an errand boy : all the rest were at home, and the few rags of clothing they had were alternately worn by them, so that only one or two could go out at a time, while the others were obliged to remain at home nearly naked. In order to provide for these destitute ones, fragment schools were opened, cast off clothes were solicited, and others purchased. These were lent to the children to enable them to attend the schools on the Sunday, and their return required the next day, unless under very peculiar circumstances. †

A great impression was made upon the public mind by the facts that were thus made known; and it is probable that if a plan of national education had been brought forward, which allowed the use of the authorized version of the Holy Scriptures in the schools, but without any denominational catechism, it would have received the unanimous support of those who dissented from the Established Church. John Foster, a writer of great authority amongst them, had written an essay on "The Evils of Popular Ignorance," in which, after laying fully open the state of ignorance and consequent demoralization then existing among the people, he says: "There

† Sunday School Repository, 1818, p. 351,

CANNOT be in the Christian world any such thing as a nation habitually absolved from the duty of raising its people from brutish ignorance. * * * *

The concern of redeeming the people from a besotted condition of their reason and conscience is a duty at all events, and to an entire certainty is a duty imperative and absolute; and any pretended necessity for such a direction of the national exertion as would be, through a long succession of time, incompatible with a paramount attention to this, must be an imposition too gross to furnish an excuse for being imposed on. Now we earnestly wish it might be granted by the Almighty, that the political institutions of the nations should speedily take a form and come under an administration that *would* apply the energy of the state to so sublime a purpose; nor can we imagine any test of their merits so fair as the question, whether, and in what degree, they do this, nor, of course, any test by which they may more naturally decline to have those merits tried." *

* An Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance. By John Foster. Second Edition, 1821, pp. 322, 323, 335.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mr. Brougham's Plan for the Promotion of General Education.

IN the session of Parliament held during the year 1820, Mr. Brougham brought forward his measure for better providing the means of education for His Majesty's subjects. The bill brought in by that gentleman, as amended in committee, provided that a complaint of the want of schools might be made to the quarter sessions, by a grand jury, justice, minister, or householder. The justices were then to try the complaint; and if they determined that it was well-founded, they were to issue a warrant to the receiver-general of the land-tax, requiring him to advance the sum necessary to purchase land and build a school room. This advance was to be repaid out of the consolidated fund. The salaries of the masters were to be raised by the churchwardens, under a warrant of the justices, and to be paid half-yearly. The masters were to be chosen by the majority of householders present at a meeting in the school house; to which meeting, persons having real property in the parish, to the amount of £100 per annum, were to be allowed to send a representative. The name of the party chosen was to be sent to the rector, vicar, perpetual curate, curate, or other resident officiating minister; and if he objected to the

party elected, a fresh election was to take place ; and so on, in like manner, as often as the person chosen and reported should not be approved of by the resident officiating minister, and until he should approve of the person elected. It was provided, that no person should be capable of being chosen by such meeting, under the age of twenty-four, or above the age of forty ; or who did not produce a certificate of his character and ability, and that he was a member of the Church of England by law established, signed by the resident officiating minister and three landholders of the parish where he had lived for the last twelve months. The clergyman of the parish for which the master was chosen was declared ineligible for the office ; but any other clergyman might be elected. It was further provided, that the master should teach the Holy Scriptures according to the authorized version, and use select passages thereof for reading and writing ; and should teach no other book of religion, without consent of the resident officiating minister ; and should use no form of prayer or worship, except the Lord's prayer, or other select passage of the Holy Scriptures. The Catechism of the Church of England, and such portions of its Liturgy as the resident officiating minister might appoint, were to be taught during the half of the school hours of one day in the week, to be fixed by the minister ; to whom the right of visitation and examination of the school was given, and who was also to have the power to direct the teaching of the Catechism and Liturgy, by the master, on the evening of the Lord's day. The scholars were to attend the divine service of the Church of England once every Lord's day. Parents and guardians,

however, might withdraw their children from the teaching of the Catechism and Liturgy, and from attendance on such divine service, on their taking care that the scholars so withdrawn should attend some other place of Christian worship. The power of dismissing the master was vested in the bishop of the diocese, either personally, or through his archdeacon, chancellor, or dean.

This measure did not meet with general acceptance. It was looked upon with suspicion by the members of the Church of England; probably on account of the quarter from which it came. The following extract from a pamphlet, written by the Rev. R. Lloyd, A.M., Rector of St. Dunstan's in the West, will show the character of the objections stated against it:—"The nature of Mr. Brougham's plan of instruction does not, as far as I can perceive, essentially differ from the Lancasterian or British school. Whilst it admits some select portions of the Scriptures to be used, it prohibits all notes and comments, all explications whatever, illustrative of their sense, under the influence of a morbid and symbolizing liberality, which renounces what is peculiar, and adopts only what is common to all sects and parties. He has, indeed, made some concession in favour of our ecclesiastical establishment, in order, it seems, to render his bill more palatable to its members; but these concessions, which affect to relieve it of its obnoxious qualities, produce no such effect."

The dissenters, on the other hand, complained of the measure, as giving an undue preponderance in the education of the people to the Established Church; inasmuch as the master was required to be a member of

that church, the schools were to be placed under clerical and episcopal control, and the provisions introduced for relieving the children of dissenters, would, if made use of, expose such children to painful observations.

Foster, in his preface to the Essay from which we have already quoted, thus speaks of Mr. Brougham's plan:—

“The luminous and comprehensive mind of the mover of this important measure, the independent spirit of his speculations, his contempt of old prejudices, his hostility to diversified, restricted, and antiquated systems of policy, and his admirable exertions and success in exposing the iniquitous management under which a multitude of institutions for education had become worse than useless, seemed to give a certain pledge that any plan which he would propose could not fail to be a model of liberality and equity. It must have been from some widely different quarter that we could have expected a scheme framed in conformity to those very prejudices, those invidious distinctions in the community, those principles of exclusive privilege and unequal advantage of which it had not been supposed there could be a more determined enemy. And if the frame and substance of such a scheme appeared in striking contrariety to its author's long-avowed and proclaimed principles, the mode devised for ensuring its pure and effective operation seemed to present as signal a contrast with his reputed high-toned pride. It was most surprising that for a due exercise of supervision he should submit to the humiliation of proposing—not any mode of placing the schools under free public inspection, not any adjustment for subjecting

them to the vigilance of the respectable inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who must naturally be most interested for their right management, not any method which experience had proved to be beneficial—but an appointment of very much the same nature as that of which he had himself just rendered the utter inefficiency so notorious.” *

The Committee of the Sunday School Union examined the bill in reference to its effect on Sunday schools. They soon came to the conclusion that it must be most injurious, as it would withdraw the scholars, and undermine the foundation of benevolent and gratuitous instruction. They thought that the measure would deprive Sunday scholars of the invaluable means of moral and religious instruction they now enjoyed, without providing any substitute; that the mere repetition of catechism, attendance at public worship, and the routine of mechanical teaching by a paid master, was very far inferior to the unbought and inestimable labours of teachers who love their youthful charge, feel deeply concerned for their immortal welfare, and from principle devote themselves unremittingly to promote the benefit of the children whom they have voluntarily engaged to instruct.

The result of the plan, as it respected Sunday schools, was pointed out to its author. His reply was, “Oh, they were only for the occasion: when the bill passes, there will be no more occasion for them.” He was told, “If you lose our Sunday schools, you will lose one of the best bonds of society; for these voluntary teachers”

* Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance. By John Foster. Second Edition, 1821.

——“Voluntary teachers!” he exclaimed, “what do you mean? I don’t understand what you mean by voluntary teachers.” Some explanations were then given as to the constitution of Sunday schools: and with a view to further information, Mr. Butterworth requested him to visit the school in Drury Lane, to which reference has been already made; and then, for the first time, did the talented author of the bill become aware of the beneficial influence which the labours of gratuitous teachers were exerting upon the rising generation of our land. The speech made in the House of Commons by Mr. Brougham, on introducing his measure, showed his ignorance on the subject of Sunday schools. He said that the scholars in them obtained none of the useful habits inculcated by the discipline of schools under the eye of a master, which was more beneficial to a child than that of a parent. Though a dunce might go to church twice on a Sunday, he feared it would not make him more fond of the divine service. In his opinion it was not a good plan to keep children more than an hour and a half at religious worship on the day set apart for it. It was not the proper way to make them love and respect it. Let them go to church in the morning, and let their evening be devoted to that innocent play which was most congenial to their age.*

A general meeting of the gratuitous Sunday-school teachers of London and its vicinity was convened, on the 16th February, 1821; at which resolutions were adopted, embodying the objections against the bill, entertained by the committee, and instructing them to use the most

* Sunday School Repository, 1820, p. 522.

energetic means to oppose its progress. It did not, however, become necessary to take any further steps, as Mr. Brougham was deterred by the resistance which had been excited, and did not again bring forward the measure.

The discussions to which this measure gave rise were carried on with great activity. A writer in the 31st number of the "British Review," while objecting to the extension of general education among the poor, bore the following important testimony to the value of the religious instruction imparted in Sunday schools.

"Sunday schools are precisely those institutions to which on the grounds and reasons above set forth we have always been zealously attached. We are tempted to call them fine establishments: their end is incontrovertibly good; their means direct, decided, and pure. Standing on the very foundation of the Sabbath itself, and engrafted into its ordinances, they cannot, as long as that day is considered in this land as a holy day, be alienated from its objects or made subservient to human corruptions. Their very name designates and determines their character; nor can they without a profane absurdity admit anything into their procedure that does not professedly advance the work of religion in the soul. Sunday schools must be for Sunday purposes connected with Sunday duties and dedicated to Him to whom the Sunday, by an everlasting proclamation of his will, especially belongs. They are the chartered institutions of our Omnipotent Founder, who ratifies with the seal of his gracious adoption whatever man contrives, with singleness of heart, for his glory and places under his

protection. The wise teaching, therefore, of these schools we believe to be placed under the surest guarantee; they are under an implied covenant in which God himself is a party, to dispense in his name only one sort of instruction—that holy, unambiguous instruction which lays the foundation of Christian morals in Christian belief, and deduces all the duties, obligations, charities, and claims of social intercourse from scriptural authority.”

CHAPTER XV.

Formation of the American Sunday School Union.

We have already given some account of the introduction of the Sunday-school system into America, and of the formation of the "First-day, or Sunday School Society" in Philadelphia, and of the "New York Sunday School Union." In addition to these institutions, the "Philadelphia Sunday and Adult School Union" was formed May 26th, 1817, and its leading design, as expressed in the constitution, was to "cultivate unity and charity among those of different names—to ascertain the extent of gratuitous instruction in Sunday and Adult schools—to promote their establishment in the city and in the villages in the country—to give more effect to Christian exertion in general—and to encourage and strengthen each other in the cause of the Redeemer."

These three associations were local in their operations and influence. All of them, however, recognised the union of evangelical Christians as the basis of their organisation. After a useful career of seven years, the Philadelphia Sunday and Adult School Union, in obedience to a loud call for a new and more general institution, was merged in the American Sunday School Union. The suggestion of forming such an association first came from New York, and on the 25th of May,

1824, that society was formed in Philadelphia, and in 1845, was incorporated under a Charter from the Legislature of Pennsylvania. In the "Popular Sketch of the Rise and Progress of Sunday Schools in the United States," published by the American Union, the truths sought to be inculcated by the institution are thus described: "In the doctrines of the supremacy of the inspired Scriptures as the rule of faith and duty, the lost state of man by nature, and his exposure to endless punishment in a future world; his recovery only by the free, sovereign, and sustaining grace of God, through the atonement and merits of a Divine Redeemer, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit; the necessity of faith, repentance, and holy living, with an open confession of the Saviour before men, and the duty of complying with His ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper; in these doctrines are found the essential and leading truths of the Christian system; in the reception of these doctrines the members of the society agree, and with God's help they endeavour to teach and inculcate them on all whom they can properly reach."

The plans adopted for carrying out the purposes for which the Union was formed are thus stated. "The two chief objects of the Society were—1. To open new Sunday schools in neighbourhoods and settlements where they would not otherwise be established; and 2. To supply them with means of carrying on the schools successfully when thus begun. In the prosecution of this design the first obstacle to be overcome was the existence of various creeds and conflicting religious opinions and usages, especially in those districts of the

country where the influence of Sunday schools was most needed. To meet this difficulty the American Sunday School Union retained two of the most important features of the previously existing Sunday and Adult School Union, viz.: that the Board of Officers and Managers should be laymen; and second, that it should embrace members of the principal evangelical denominations of the country. The position of clergymen as public teachers of religion in their respective communities, gives them peculiar prominence and notoriety as the advocates and upholders of their respective modes of faith. Their professional pursuits and offices necessarily lead them to such views of controverted truth as must to some extent embarrass, if it would not prevent, a full measure of usefulness in the management of such an institution. As their influence is wide and thorough in the individual schools, and as we enjoy their co-operation, are favoured with their counsel, and are able to avail ourselves of their services in a variety of ways, as agents, authors, &c., we lose nothing essential to our success by this feature of our organization, while we secure a vast amount of lay labour in the promotion of the interests of religion, and relieve the clergy of a burden which would be extremely onerous."

The thin and scattered population of the western parts of the country soon engaged the attention of the Board. They found that in some of the settlements the preaching of the gospel was seldom or never enjoyed; in many there were services at intervals of some weeks, but not very regularly. Hence the Sabbath became an idle day, or was spent in secular labour and vain amusements, if

not in vicious indulgences. To supply this want in some degree, it was thought desirable to employ both clergymen and laymen to travel into various parts of the country, explore the districts and neighbourhoods in the greatest want, and endeavour to establish Sunday schools. Books for use in the school and for a lending-library were supplied gratuitously, or otherwise, if the means of the people amongst whom the school was established rendered it desirable. It can easily be imagined that in very many instances suitable individuals could be found to assist in conducting such a school, who would have shrunk from undertaking a more public office, while the children were glad of the excitement, and were at once interested in its proceedings. Parents readily accompanied their children to the place of meeting, and thus associated under good influences. The religious exercises of the school were easily expanded or prolonged to meet the religious wants of the adults, and thus habits were formed which finally resulted in a call for the introduction of regular gospel institutions. The school-house was transformed into a place of public worship, the Sunday school became the nucleus of a Christian church and congregation, and in due time a minister of the gospel was permanently established among them.

This important department of labour was systematized in 1830, and has since that time been carried on with energy and success. In order to provide the books which were required, the Board have devoted themselves to the preparation and printing of books, not merely adapted for school use, but for libraries, thus adding to their other labours the work which is done in England

by the Religious Tract Society and other publishers. The extent of their operations in this department may be estimated by the fact that they now publish about one thousand bound volumes, in addition to smaller works, and that the whole number of the Society's publications exceeds fifteen hundred.*

At the general meeting of the Sunday School Union, in 1825, great interest was excited in reference to the establishment of Sunday schools in Greece; whose inhabitants were then asserting their independence of the Turkish empire. A resolution, moved by the Rev. J. Bennett, seconded by the Rev. Sereno Dwight, of Boston, North America, and supported by the Rev. Thomas Mortimer, was adopted, by which it was declared, "That this society, anxious to promote Christian instruction among the rising race of Greeks, engages to devote to the formation and support of Sunday schools among that people whatever contributions may be forwarded to it for this specific object." In furtherance of the design contemplated in this resolution, the Committee agreed to encourage the preparation, in modern Greek, of a Summary of the History of Sunday Schools, and a Sunday School Hymn Book. To the former work they appropriated £50, and to the latter, £20. Efforts were also made to obtain additional funds, and a correspondence was opened with various parties who, it was thought, would feel interested in this effort to extend religious instruction; but no considerable results attended the exertions thus made. A few Sunday schools were

* Popular Sketch of the Rise and Progress of Sunday Schools in the United States,

established in the Island of Corfu, under the zealous superintendence of the Rev. J. Lowndes, but the attempt to introduce them on the continent of Greece was not attended with success.

The cause of Sunday schools sustained the loss, during the year 1826, of William Fox, Esq., the founder of the Sunday School Society. He died on April 1st, 1826, at Cirencester, in the 91st year of his age. He continued to the last to take a very lively interest in Sunday schools, and would often detail in an interesting manner the circumstances connected with the formation of the Sunday School Society.*

The Committee of the Sunday School Union had for a long period been sensible of the importance and necessity of increasing Sunday schools throughout the country, and of rendering those already established more efficient, especially as related to religious instruction. While much had been done, much still remained to be accomplished; and the establishment of efficient Sunday School Unions seemed to be the best means of attaining the desired objects. Mere correspondence, or an occasional transient visit by a member of the Committee, it was thought, could not produce the desired impulse. In America, as we have seen, the example had been set of employing Sunday School Missionaries, who had there been extensively useful. The Committee had long been convinced that it was desirable to adopt such a plan in this country, but had been deterred from attempting it by the smallness of their funds. This difficulty was

* Sunday School Teachers' Magazine, 1826, p. 217.

now removed by the liberal offers of some friends in the North of England; and the Committee thereupon engaged Mr. Joseph Reid Wilson, formerly Secretary of the Newcastle Union, to devote his whole time and energies to the arduous work of a Sunday School Missionary. Mr. Wilson's acquaintance with the Sunday-school system, and his zealous, persevering, and successful exertions in extending and improving it, through the neighbourhood of Newcastle, pointed him out as admirably adapted for this employment. He laboured for several years most zealously in the discharge of the duties of the office thus undertaken by him. His visits to the schools, his earnest, practical addresses to assemblies of teachers, and his lively but thoroughly Christian appeals to the thousands of scholars whom he from time to time addressed were of great benefit. The short prayer which he was in the habit of teaching the children to use in private—"Lord, convert my soul, for Christ's sake. Amen."—was blessed by the Holy Spirit to the conversion of many. His labours were suspended in the year 1837, in consequence of the death of his father, which compelled him to devote himself for a season to the duties thereupon devolving upon him. Those duties proved more onerous than had been anticipated, and ultimately a variety of circumstances concurred to induce Mr. Wilson to tender his resignation. The Committee did not fill up the vacant office. They had, during its continuance, occasionally sent out deputations of their own number to visit the several Unions, and finding that such visits proved acceptable and useful, they resolved to render them more frequent,

and this fraternal intercourse with their fellow teachers has become an important branch of the operations of the Union. England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France, and Switzerland have been thus visited with mutual benefit.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Establishment of Infant Schools.

WHILE the Sunday-school system was thus being gradually extended and consolidated, the attention of those who were interested in the education of the young had been directed to the importance of commencing that education at a much earlier age than had hitherto been thought necessary. With whom the plan of taking the children into school at two years or two years and-a-half old originated is not clear. Emmanuel de Fellenberg, it appears, had long entertained the idea, and Robert Owen, of New Lanark, in Scotland, had it in mind a considerable time before he reduced it to practice. Mr. Brougham said he hardly recollected the time at which he himself did not feel persuaded that what is commonly called education begins too late, and is too much confined to mere learning. He thought that Robert Owen was the first person who made the experiment, as Fellenberg's plan, although in principle the same, did not extend to infants of so early an age. Robert Owen's infant school was completely established about the year 1816. Fellenberg's school was formed some few years previously. The former was connected with Robert Owen's manufactory, where about 2,500 persons of all ages capable of assisting were employed, all of whom lived on the spot, excepting about 300 who lodged in the

town of Old Lanark, about two miles distant. Fellenberg's establishment for poor children was in like manner connected with his agricultural concerns, but still more closely, for the scholars lived entirely on the farm, and held no intercourse with their parents, who were for the most part persons in the worst classes of society, and had deserted their children.

Mr. Brougham had seen Fellenberg's establishment in 1816, and was acquainted with the principles and details of Owen's school, from his own statements, and from the testimony of friends, amongst whom were Benjamin Smith, Sir Samuel Romilly, and William Allen, on whose judgment he could rely. He had thus become convinced that the principle might be advantageously extended to the poor population of a crowded city. In the winter of 1818, his friend James Mill, of the India House, and himself, had much discussion with Mr. Owen respecting the plan, and were immediately joined by Mr. John Smith, M.P., the Marquis of Lansdowne, Mr. Zachary Macaulay, and Mr. Thomas Babington, in the attempt to establish an infant school in Westminster. In a few weeks they were joined by Lord Dacre, Sir Thomas Baring, Bart., Mr. William Leake, M.P., Mr. Joseph Wilson, of Spitalfields, Mr. Henry Hase, of the Bank of England, Mr. John Walker, of Southgate, and one or two other friends. Mr. Owen furnished them with a master in the person of J. Buchanan, who had been superintendent of his school at New Lanark, and the necessary preparations being completed, the children were received early in the year 1819.*

* Observations relative to Infant Schools, by Thomas Pole, M.D.

Mr. Joseph Wilson speedily established an infant school in Quaker Street, erecting and furnishing the school-room at his own expense, and engaging Mr. Samuel Wilderspin and his wife as the master and mistress. The school was opened July 24, 1820, and under the judicious management of Mr. and Mrs. Wilderspin soon contained 200 scholars. This extension of the benefits of education to infants excited much interest. The method of instruction was found to be a happy combination of exercise, relaxation, and learning. Nothing was made a toil, but all was rendered pleasing as well as profitable. The cultivation of kind and benevolent dispositions, and the inculcation of moral and religious feelings were prominent parts of the plan. After the school had been some time in operation, Mr. Wilderspin published a work, entitled—"On the importance of educating the infant children of the poor, showing how 300 children from 18 months to 7 years of age may be managed by one master and mistress."

Mr. Wilderspin has left an amusing account of his troubles at the opening of his school, and of the means by which he obtained relief.

"As soon as the mothers had left the premises I attempted to engage the affections of their offspring. I shall never forget the effort. A few who had been previously at a dame school sat quietly, but the rest missing their parents crowded about the door. One fellow, finding he could not open it, set up a cry of 'Mammy, Mammy!' and in raising this delightful sound all the rest simultaneously joined. My wife, who, though reluctant at first, had determined, on my accepting

the situation, to give me the utmost aid, tried with myself to calm the tumult, but our efforts were utterly vain. The paroxysm of sorrow increased instead of subsiding, and so intolerable did it become that she could endure it no longer and left the room, and at length exhausted by effort, anxiety, and noise, I was compelled to follow her example, leaving my unfortunate pupils in one dense mass, crying, yelling, and kicking against the door. I will not attempt to describe my feelings, but ruminating on what I then considered egregious folly, in supposing that any two persons could manage such a large number of children, I was struck by the sight of a cap of my wife's, adorned with coloured ribbons, lying on the table, and observing from the window a clothes prop, it occurred to me that I might put the cap on it, return to the school, and try the effect. The confusion when I entered was tremendous, but on raising the pole surmounted by the cap all the children were instantly silent, and looked up in mute astonishment, and when any hapless wight seemed disposed to renew the noise a few shakes of the prop restored tranquillity, and perhaps produced a laugh."

The charms of this wonderful instrument soon vanished, but he had got the key of the position—visible illustration; he had found the key to the proper training of infants. It was evident that their senses must be engaged, and the grand secret of training them was to descend to their level and become a child.

The following description of the mode of instruction adopted will show how the objects aimed at were sought to be attained.

“The children are all ordered to sit on the ground, which they readily obey; they are then desired to take hold of their toes, which being done they are desired to count 100, or as many as may be thought proper, which they do by lifting up each foot alternately, all the children counting at one time. By this means every part of the body is put in motion, and with this advantage, that by lifting up each foot every time they count one, it causes them to keep time, a thing very essential, as unless this was the case, all would be confusion. They also add up two at a time by the same method, thus, two, four, six, eight, ten, twelve, and so on, but care must be taken not to keep them too long at one thing, or too long in one position.

“Having done a lesson or two this way, they are desired to put their feet out straight, and putting their hands together, they say one and one are two, two and one are three, three and one are four, four and one are five, five and one are six, six and two are eight; in this way they go on until they are desired to stop.

“They also learn the pence and multiplication tables by forming themselves in circles around a number of young trees that are planted in the play ground. For the sake of order, each circle has its own particular tree, and when they are ordered to the trees every child knows which tree to go to. As soon as they are assembled round the trees they join hands and walk round, every child saying the multiplication table until they have finished it; they then let go hands and put them behind, and for variety sake sing the pence table, the alphabet, hymns, &c., &c.; thus the children are

gradually improved and delighted, for they call it play, and it matters little what they call it, as long as they are edified, exercised, pleased, and made happy."

As the infants were of course unable to read, the aid of Scripture prints was called in to assist in conveying to their minds a knowledge of the facts recorded in the Bible, thus laying a right foundation for the truths to be educed from those facts.

It will be perceived that at this early stage the infant school was not furnished with that important adjunct which has now come to be considered indispensable—a gallery—by means of which the teacher obtains a more perfect command of the whole body of the scholars, who can at the same time see and hear the teacher without difficulty or hindrance.

The attention of Sunday-school teachers was speedily directed to this enlargement of daily instruction, and the question was agitated as to the extent to which it could be made subservient to the more specific object of the Sunday school. The Committee of the Sunday School Union devoted one of their quarterly conferences in the year 1823 to a consideration of the question—"Are infant schools beneficial, and how far are they adapted to promote the objects of Sunday schools?" * There was little, if any, hesitation expressed by the various speakers, in answering the first part of this question in the affirmative; but there was some difference of opinion as to the latter part of it. Generally, it was considered that infant schools were desirable, as if they became general, teachers would no longer have to be chiefly

* Sunday School Teachers' Magazine, 1823, pp. 329-333.

employed in rooting up the weeds and briars, but only in continuing an excellent system of moral and religious cultivation. There was, however, scarcely a suggestion made in favour of making an infant class a constituent part of the Sunday school. On the contrary, one teacher "feared that if Sunday schools were to be brought down to the standard of nurseries, they would lose their character as religious institutions, and thus the cause would be injured. He did not suppose that the friends who had spoken wished these very little children to be brought into Sunday schools. They were not capable of appreciating the religious instruction communicated in a Sunday school, and he thought to devote attention to them would interfere with what was at present doing, and that the time might be better employed. * * *

He must oppose the plan of teaching by pictures; he pitied the men who could place such pictures in the Bible as were to be seen in some old books. Would the picture of the brazen serpent convey the idea that 'like as Moses *lifted* up the serpent' * * * He had no objection to the teaching of infants; he did not disapprove of infant schools; but what he opposed was the plan of attaching them to Sunday schools."

Mr. Wilderspin attended this conference and spoke at some length in favour of the infant-school system. He, however, also viewed it rather as a preparatory system, and was not prepared to recommend its adoption as a part of the Sunday school. As the arguments used by him for gathering infants into school are now generally considered to be as applicable to Sundays as to the other days of the week it may be well to mention them. He informed the

meeting that "866 children had passed through his hand; and he ventured to say, that had it not been for the infant school, not 100 of the number would have been sent to school, but they would have been suffered to run about the streets into all manner of evil. * * *

If infant schools only took the children out of the streets they would be very useful. * * *

The pictures were very attractive to infants; he had a little child in the school between four and five years of age who was much pleased with the pictures; he had parents who possessed a beautiful Bible which they kept merely to look at for its beauty without examining its contents. This child, having been taught by the pictures, said when he went home 'father will you please read to me about Joseph and his brethren?' The father replied, 'don't bother me.' The child added, 'master told me about it and said it was to be found in the Bible;' the father put the child off, and referred him to his mother. The child was persevering, and applied to the visitor who came to the house, and the parents were at last induced to comply with the child's desire. He should never have heard of this incident had not the time arrived when the child was old enough to be drafted off to the national school, and then the father waited on him and said he was sorry I should send the child away. He was informed that his boy being six he was removed to make room for others. The father then gave his reason why he wished the child to stay—'it seems you have pictures in your school, and I have a Bible in my house which I did not much like to look into till my child made me; having done with Joseph, then the boy would make me

read about Lazarus being raised from the dead; and, in fact, he kept one so well employed that I have now learned to read the Bible for myself, and as soon as I can I will associate myself with a body of professing Christians and hear this book explained which I have too much despised.' Thus the infant scholars act as missionaries to their parents. It is a great advantage of infant schools that they liberate the elder children of a family who formerly were compelled to look after the younger, but who are now enabled to attend school and improve themselves."

Mr. Wilderspin died at Wakefield, Yorkshire, in the year 1866. His long-continued labours in the cause of Infant Education were acknowledged by the raising an annuity, partly from Government and partly the result of public subscriptions, to provide for his declining years.

The infant class has thus become a necessary part of every well-conducted Sunday school, and is found to exert a most beneficial influence on every department of the institution. The earlier the scholars enter the walls of the school, the more do they become attached to it so as to quit it with reluctance: not only are they preserved from the acquisition of much knowledge that is evil, but scriptural truth is presented to them in a form adapted to their infantile understandings, and thus exercises its power on their affections, and, as Mr. Wilderspin observed at the above conference, the older children of a family are not compelled to remain at home to take care of the younger, but all can derive the moral and spiritual advantages which the Sunday school provides.

The committee of the Sunday School Union have given much attention to this subject. Their deputations to the country have always kept it before them, and have urged upon the teachers they have met the importance of providing in connection with every school a separate room for the instruction of the infants, furnished with a gallery and the other appliances adapted to render the instruction more pleasant and efficient. In the year 1851, they offered prizes for essays on the subject of Infant Classes in Sunday schools. That which was selected by the adjudicators as entitled to the first prize was found to have been written by Mr. Charles Reed, a member of the committee, and was published under the title of "The Infant Class in the Sunday School."

But a still more important service was rendered by the committee to infant education, both in day and Sunday schools, by the introduction of what is now known as "The Letter Box." This important addition to the appliances for infant instruction consists of the adaptation and enlargement of what had been long known as a help to teaching the letters of the alphabet to the younger members of families. It consisted of single letters on wood or bone, contained in a box, from which they could be selected and arranged by the children, who thus acquired the first elements of literary knowledge, while they considered themselves at play. It is recorded of the Rev. Rowland Hill, who opened the first Sunday school in London, that "he was accustomed to give away boxes of letters which he had prepared for the young, who, by selecting the letters which compose

the words of a sentence, may be taught to read and spell at the same time.”*

The year 1833 witnessed the removal from earth of this venerable man. He never altered his views on the subject of education. His deliberate conviction was “the more I look at the matter the more satisfied I am that the reign of education is the reign of order and happiness, and that to promote it is an injunction arising out of the essence of Christianity itself.” For many years he had an assemblage of the Sunday-school children of London, in Surrey Chapel, on Easter Monday and Tuesday; the boys on one day and the girls on the other. He composed and printed a hymn for the occasion, and addressed the young people from the scripture printed at the head of the hymn. Two days before his death he stood, on Easter Tuesday, at his drawing-room window and saw the children thronging the chapel-yard, and spoke with much delight of by-gone days when he had met them and preached to them the Lord Jesus Christ. His constant practice, till within a year or two of his death, was to visit his school for a few minutes on the Sabbath afternoon. His presence cheered the teachers, whose services he often kindly acknowledged. The last ministerial effort which Mr. Hill made was in the cause of Sunday schools. He had engaged to address the teachers of the South London Sunday School Union, on Tuesday evening, the 2nd of April, only eight days before his decease. Although he was in so weak a state as to be scarcely able to ascend the pulpit, yet he was anxious to discharge this duty. He spoke with

* Memoir of the Rev. Rowland Hill, 1844.

affectionate fervour about ten minutes. He became greatly exhausted, and finished his address and his ministry with his favourite and oft-repeated exhortation—"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." In this last address Mr. Hill referred to the subject of infant schools. "I did think till I had considered the subject more deeply that we were carrying things a little too far by the education of children in infant schools. Now I think otherwise, and feel that we cannot begin too early—the earlier they are brought under a religious education the better."

In the early part of the year 1842, the Committee of the Sunday School Union heard that one of their number, Mr. W. J. Morrish, a teacher in the Paddington Chapel school, was conducting a large class of young children with much convenience and advantage, by the use of an enlarged specimen of a box of letters. A deputation was appointed to visit the school and report the result of the experiment, which proved so satisfactory that it was determined to construct similar boxes for sale. This matter, trifling as it may now appear, occupied much time and attention, but ultimately this assistance to infant class instruction was offered in a considerably improved form. It was seen at the Union by Mr. Kay, now Sir James Kay Shuttleworth, Bart., then Secretary to the Committee of the Privy Council on Education, was adopted by that Committee, and has now in a variety of forms, and in larger sizes than are necessary for Sunday schools, found its way into the great educational

institutions of our land. The "letter box," as issued by the Union, contains in separate compartments an adequate supply of letters, large and small, stops, and figures, to enable sentences of some length to be set up in the grooves with which the inside of the lid is supplied, and which can be detached for the convenience of the teacher. The effect of this "letter box" has been great in the assistance afforded to the teachers of infant classes, the scholars in which thus obtain the art of reading with almost inconceivable rapidity. Elementary books and classes become unnecessary, and a well conducted Sunday school comes to consist of infant, scripture, and senior classes alone.

CHAPTER XVII.

Senior Classes in Sunday Schools.

THE mention of "senior classes" naturally invites attention to that which has become so important a department of the Sunday school. For many years, it was on the one hand the custom not to admit very young children, and on the other to dismiss them when they had attained the age of 14. This dismissal was made an event of some solemnity; bibles were publicly presented to the retiring scholars, often by the minister, and suitable advice given. Thus so far as the teachers were concerned, the influence of the school over these young persons was withdrawn at a period when it was peculiarly needed. As the young children were prevented from entering until they had in many cases acquired evil principles and practices which gave anxiety and trouble to their teachers, so those young persons in whom the good effects of religious training might be expected to be found were separated from their teachers, who thus lost the opportunity of continuing that training and of witnessing its results in their consecration to the service of Jesus Christ.

The introduction of the infant school system in connection with Sunday schools has removed the difficulty with respect to the young children, and the infant class now generally forms the most delightful and successful portion of the teachers' labours.

The establishment of distinct classes for scholars who had arrived at the age of 14 or 15, and who were disinclined to remain in the ordinary classes of the school was first suggested by the teachers of America. In order to preserve these scholars under religious influences it was proposed to establish distinct schools, to which the elder scholars of other schools might be transferred, and where a more enlarged course of Scripture instruction might be entered upon.* In many cases the ministers conducted Bible classes for these young people, and as the American schools generally consisted of the children of members of the congregation, this arrangement, where carried out, secured some of the advantages sought for; but not all. It was obviously impracticable for the minister thus to employ the Lord's day, which was the time when the young people were at liberty, and when it was most important that they should be profitably employed. The Committee of the American Union adverted to this subject in their report for 1826, and it speedily excited the attention of the teachers in England and of the Committee of the Sunday School Union. They were not then prepared to recommend any measures for retaining the senior scholars in immediate connection with the schools to which they belonged, but in an article inserted in the Teachers' Magazine for 1827, p. 2, the idea of a senior or adult class was thus developed:—"I would form young persons of 14 and upwards, who had passed through the catechisms used in the other classes and obtained a good report of their teachers, into a distinct class, to be termed the senior or select. These should not be *required* to commit hymns

* Sunday School Teachers' Magazine, 1826, pp. 130-136, 337, 338.

and catechisms to memory; the avocations of many at this period of life would probably in some measure oppose obstacles to this; a portion of scripture, bearing on a certain and intelligible subject should be appropriated for each Sabbath's reading, and the scholars be encouraged to bring written questions or remarks on the same, together with references to other portions of scripture on the subject."

Thus the attention of teachers was gradually roused to the importance of distinct efforts being made to retain the elder scholars in the schools, and to provide for them instruction adapted to their advancing years. In the year 1829, the Committee of the Sunday School Union requested the Rev. H. F. Burder to prepare an address inviting the serious attention of ministers of the gospel to the nature and importance of Bible classes. In the address prepared in compliance with that request, and widely circulated, it was suggested that the characteristic principle of the tuition in such classes was that of catechetical instruction—that this principle had the sanction of immemorial usage, having been adopted with success by the wisest preceptors in successive generations. Catechisms without number, not only for the purposes of religion, but also of science, might be regarded as so many attestations to the excellence of the general system. It was further observed that it was important to bear in mind that the application of the principle was not dependent on a printed form or on a fixed series of questions and answers, neither did it necessarily require the labour of committing to memory specific phrases or sentences. If certain truths or facts

had been previously conveyed to the mind of the learner with simplicity, with clearness, and with force, it might be easy for the teacher to put to the test and to elicit the amount of knowledge the learner might have acquired, and it might not be difficult to him after being a little accustomed to the effort to express the ideas he had imbibed in terms the most familiar to his own mind.

It will be perceived that the classes thus recommended would only have a very indirect bearing on Sunday schools. It would be unreasonable to expect that pastors should give up their time on Sunday to the exercises of such classes, and as that day is the only one when the larger portion of scholars can attend, they must be necessarily shut out from the advantages to be thus attained. Teachers, therefore, sought to establish classes for senior scholars in immediate connection with the schools, and especial success attended such efforts in the northern parts of the country, where manufactures afford daily employment for large numbers of young persons, who are left at liberty on Sundays. In the Sunday school in Bennett-street, Manchester, the average of the individuals composing the young women's class was found on inquiry to be $19\frac{1}{4}$ years, and in the young men's class $17\frac{1}{2}$ years. In the Hanover-road school, at Halifax, containing 500 scholars, 160 were more than 16 years of age, and one of three classes connected with Sion Chapel School, Halifax, contained 57 females whose ages varied from 16 to 45.

In consequence of the attention drawn to this subject, classes under the varied designations of senior scholars', young men and women's, or adult classes, have come to

be considered necessary to every well-conducted Sunday school.

Pursuant to the opinion expressed by Mr. Horace Mann, in his admirable report on the education returns of the census of 1851, "The *senior class* is the grand *desideratum* to the perfect working of the Sunday-school system, for without some means of continuous instruction and maintaining influence when the scholar enters the most critical period of life, the chances are that what has been already done will prove to have been done in vain." His observations also on the mode of conducting and sustaining such classes are well worthy of record.

"But in proportion to the importance of these senior classes is the difficulty of establishing and conducting them, a higher order of teachers being needful, whose superiority of intellect and information shall command the willing deference of the scholars, while their hearty sympathy with those they teach shall render the connection rather one of friendship than of charity. Such classes, too, will not be long continued with efficiency unless the teacher feels so strong an interest in his pupils as to make their secular prosperity a portion of his care. It is obvious, therefore, that the scheme requires for its complete development more aid from those who are in age, position, and intelligence, considerably superior to most of the present teachers, and who hitherto have very sparingly contributed their personal efforts to the cause of the Sunday school." *

* Census of Great Britain, 1851.—Education in Great Britain.—The Official Report of Horace Mann, Esq., p. 71.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Jubilee of Sunday Schools.—Conclusion.

THE year 1831 will ever be memorable, on account of the celebration of the Jubilee of Sunday schools. The idea had been suggested to the Committee of the Union by Mr. James Montgomery, the warm friend of Sunday schools, as well as the Christian poet. In a letter to Mr. Lloyd, dated December 11, 1829, Mr. Montgomery remarked—"It has occurred to me that a Sunday school Jubilee, in the year 1831, fifty years from the origin of Sunday schools, might be the means of extraordinary and happy excitement to the public mind in favour of these Institutions, of which there was never more need than at this time, when daily instruction is within the reach of almost every family; for the more universal the education of the children of the poor becomes, the greater necessity there is that they should have religious knowledge imparted to them; which can be done, perhaps, on no day so well as the Lord's." This communication excited much anxious deliberation. The result was, that in the Report presented to the Annual Meeting, the Committee of the Sunday School Union stated the plan which they recommended for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of Sunday schools, namely:—

1. That the Sunday school Jubilee be held on

Wednesday, the 14th of September, 1831—the anniversary of Mr. Raikes's birthday.

2. That a prayer meeting of Sunday school teachers, either united or in each separate school, as may be thought most advisable, be held from seven to eight o'clock in the morning.

3. That the children in the schools connected with the Auxiliary and Country Unions, be assembled for public worship; the service to commence at half-past ten, and close at twelve.

4. That at six o'clock a public meeting be held in Exeter Hall, for the teachers of London and its vicinity, and that public meetings be held at the same time in each of the country Unions.

5. That as Sunday school Unions do not at present exist in some parts of this country, it is recommended that in such places Sunday school teachers should unite for the purpose of celebrating the Jubilee according to the above plan, and transmit their contributions to the Sunday School Union.

Mr. Montgomery kindly wrote two hymns for teachers and one for scholars, and Mrs. Gilbert another for scholars, to be used at the above meetings, which, with a portrait of Mr. Raikes, were engraved on steel. Medals were also struck in commemoration of the occasion; and, at the request of the committee, Mrs. Copley prepared a sketch of the History of Sunday schools, adapted to the perusal of children. The sale of these publications was so extensive, that the profits arising from them wholly defrayed the large expenses which the committee incurred in the celebration.

The arrangements thus made by the committee were carried out, not only in London, but in most parts of the country; and a season of holy excitement and pleasure was experienced, which still dwells in the memory of those who were privileged to partake of it. The largest assemblage of scholars in London was at Exeter Hall, where 4,043 were gathered together. It was found impossible to admit the whole into the large Hall; where the Rev. John Morison, D.D., delivered the address, from Jer. iii, 4: "Wilt thou not from this time, cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?" Those who were thus excluded, were addressed in the lower Hall, by the Rev. Joseph Ivimey. Very many similar meetings were held, in various parts of London and its vicinity; and, probably, 50,000 scholars thus joined in celebrating the Jubilee. In the afternoon, however, the interest which, in the earlier parts of the day, had been distributed in different portions amongst the respective prayer meetings of teachers, and assemblies of scholars, became concentrated upon one object—the great Jubilee Meeting of Sunday School Teachers at Exeter Hall.

The chair was taken by the Right Hon. Lord Henley. After singing the Jubilee Hymn, "Let songs of praise arise," &c., the Rev. R. H. Shepherd offered up prayer to God; and Mr. Lloyd read an address from the committee, stating the circumstances under which the meeting had been convened. The business of the meeting was then introduced by the Noble Chairman; and the Rev. John Blackburn moved, and the Rev. F. A. Cox, D.D., seconded, the following resolution:—"That

in reviewing the past fifty years, the small beginnings, the gradual progress, and the present extension of Sunday schools, at home and abroad, demand our grateful acknowledgments to Almighty God, by whose blessing these Institutions have been made the means of greatly promoting the instruction of the young, and of raising up, both from the scholars and teachers, many devoted and successful labourers in the Church of Christ."

The second resolution was moved by the Rev. John Burnet, and seconded by John Ivatt Briscoe, Esq., M.P., and was to the following effect:—"That the increase of our population, and the extension of general knowledge, show the vast importance of augmenting the means of religious education; and that, from the present era, the friends of education are called upon to make the most strenuous efforts to increase the number of Sunday school teachers and scholars, both at home and abroad." The Rev. J. C. Brigham, of New York, Secretary to the American Bible Society, then furnished to the meeting some details relative to the progress of Sunday schools in America; after which the Rev. John Morison, D.D., moved—"That in order to promote the extension of religious education, it is of great importance to raise the means for the promotion of Sunday School Missions, and to encourage the erection of additional permanent buildings, adapted for Sunday schools, which may also be suitable for infant or day schools." This resolution was seconded by the Rev. Samuel Drew, A.M.; and, with a vote of thanks to the Chairman, who presented a cheque for twenty guineas, as his contribution to the Jubilee Offering, terminated the business of the meeting.

In acknowledging the vote of thanks, his Lordship said—"You will easily, I am sure, believe me, my Christian friends, when I inform you, that I never yet felt so great a degree of embarrassment, in receiving the approbation of my fellow Christians, as on the present occasion. This meeting—exceeding in point of numbers any that I have seen—exceeding, as I am sure it does, in knowledge and intelligence, and in Christian spirit, every meeting that I ever before beheld collected within the walls of an assembly,—to receive the thanks and the approbation of such a meeting is a proud moment in the life of one who never sought public applause or public favour. It is a moment that cannot be appreciated. Ladies and gentlemen,—till to-day, though I was aware of their excellence—though I was aware of much of the good that has been done by Sunday schools—I was, to a degree, ignorant of the vast amount of good derived from their hands. In the words of one of our poets, I would say,

Greatly instructed, I shall hence depart,
Greatly improved in mind, and thought, and heart.

May you proceed from grace to grace. May this work of faith and labour of love extend, not only throughout this country, but to the most distant shores. May it extend to nations yet unborn, and be the means of raising millions to happiness in this world, and to a crown of glory in the world to come."

The vast assembly then rose, and sang the Jubilee Hymn, "Love is the theme of Saints above," &c. The effect of this concluding exercise was most overwhelming, and will never be forgotten by those who had the happiness to be present.

In order that those who had been unable to obtain admission might not be wholly disappointed, the lower Hall was opened, and quickly filled. Here, the Rev. Samuel Hillyard, of Bedford, presided; and addresses were delivered by Mr. Gurney, Rev. Robert Vaughan, Thomas Farmer, Esq., Rev. Jos. Belcher, Rev. Arthur Tidman, Rev. Thomas Binney, and Rev. George Evans. The last speaker communicated the intelligence, which had arrived that afternoon, of the simultaneous celebration of the Jubilee in America. Notwithstanding this additional meeting, there were still many who were unable to share in the intellectual feast thus provided; and for their accommodation, the Rev. J. Macnaughten, the minister of the Scotch Church in Crown Court, kindly lent the use of that place, where a third meeting was held. James Wyld, Esq., presided; and the Rev. J. Ivimey, Rev. W. D. Day, Rev. W. Davis, Missionary to Graham's Town, South Africa, Rev. J. Macnaughten, Thomas Thompson, Esq., and Lieut. Arnold, addressed the assembly.

In no part of the country was the celebration of the Jubilee carried out with greater earnestness than at Halifax, in Yorkshire, a town celebrated for its attachment to Sunday schools, and where about one fourth of the population is to be found enjoying their advantages. So much interest did the proceedings excite that the celebration has been repeated ever since at intervals of about five years. In 1861, the sixth repetition occurred, and a few particulars from the report to be found in the Union Magazine for that year will appropriately close this review of the FIRST FIFTY YEARS OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

“The sun shone brightly, the factories and shops were all closed, the streets became alive with visitors hastening to the place of meeting. The schools from the country entered the town preceded by their respective bands, who were to assist in conducting the singing. At ten o'clock the schools commenced entering, but two hours were occupied before they were stationed in their allotted places. At length 87 different schools, comprising nearly 28,000 teachers and scholars, and 580 musical performers, were assembled in the Piece Hall. This building is of stone, quadrangular in shape, and incloses a piece of ground of about 10,000 yards. The open galleries of the building were occupied by thousands of spectators, who had paid from 2s. 6d. to 6d. each for admission, and from which all the expenses were paid.

“Mr. Abel Dean conducted the music. Having obtained order by the elevation of a large board, on which was printed in large letters the word ‘silence,’ the first hymn was sung—

The day of Jubilee now breaks, &c.

“The effect was very startling. The vast mass of children sung together, and as the volume of sound from the little ones, accompanied by the powerful yet sweet music of the 27 different bands, rolled out upon the air, the effect upon the visitors in the galleries, as well as upon those outside the Hall, was grand in the extreme, and could not fail to remind us of that great yet more perfect gathering of the redeemed in heaven.

“After an interval, during which the Low Moor band performed the chorus, ‘The heavens are telling,’ the second hymn was commenced to the tune of St. George—

How vast the temple where we meet,
As we have met before;
With grateful joy each other greet,
And nature's God adore.

“To this hymn there were seven verses, but so pleased were the audience with the way in which it was sung, as evinced by the vociferous cheers which greeted it, that it had to be repeated, after which was sung, ‘Be present at our table, Lord,’ &c., when refreshments, consisting of buns, water, oranges, &c., were freely distributed to the children, who judging from the rapid manner in which the various edibles were disposed of, were as much pleased with this part of the day's pleasure as any.

“After an interval of an hour, the conductor again ascended the box, and the roll of the drums having called for silence, the next hymn was sung, commencing—

’Twas God that made the ocean,
And laid its sandy bed.

“The singing of this hymn was beautiful, and it had to be repeated.

“The Hallelujah Chorus was then beautifully and correctly given and repeated, after which followed, ‘Before Jehovah's awful throne,’ &c., to the tune ‘Wareham,’ when this interesting celebration was brought to a close by singing the National Anthem.”

The preceding narrative of the origin and progress of Sunday schools during the first fifty years of their existence, will fail of its design if, in addition to the gratification which it may afford in tracing the commencement and onward progress of a benevolent and Christian effort, which has exerted, and is still exerting,

so powerful and beneficial an influence on the national character, it does not also excite feelings of devout and humble gratitude to the Author of all Good, who has so eminently blessed an instrumentality so humble and feeble in its commencement.

A contrast of England as she is, with what she was prior to the introduction of Sunday schools, will show the vast improvement in her intellectual, moral, and religious condition; and the only question which can arise, will be, to what extent that improvement is attributable to the introduction of Sunday schools. Our universities are increased in number—their advantages are, to a considerable extent, thrown open to all classes of the community—their discipline is improved, and their honours can only be obtained as the result of examinations, which bring out evidence of careful study; while our nobility and legislators exhibit the influence which their superior education has had upon their minds by their readiness to assist the intellectual pursuits of those who are less favourably situated. We have passed through seasons of intense political excitement and of severe distress, but they have disturbed the public peace in the smallest possible degree, while the manner in which the recent suffering among the manufacturers of cotton goods in Lancashire was borne, excited the astonishment and thankfulness of us all.

And what connection have Sunday schools with this? We answer, that to Sunday schools is owing that increased attention to the general education of the people, which has ended in raising England from almost the lowest in the scale to but one step below the highest,

there being now 1 in 7 of her population in attendance at daily schools. The increase in the number of those able to read, "through the medium of Sunday schools," as stated in one of the early addresses of the Religious Tract Society, led to the establishment of that great and remarkably useful institution, which has issued 959 millions of publications; while the want of Bibles for the Sunday scholars of Wales induced the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which has circulated 70 millions of copies of the sacred volume in whole or in part. At the present time there are also published, mostly in London, 801 periodical publications, many of which have an enormous circulation throughout the country. We are now looking merely at the intellectual influence of this extension of knowledge, and in connection with it there has to be borne in mind the fact that every Lord's day, and on many other occasions, there are nearly 300,000 teachers, of various grades of intellectual acquirement, in close intercourse with above 3,000,000 of the young people of our land. It is not surprising, under these circumstances, to find a great improvement in the intellectual character of our people, and that it has been thought right to extend largely the enjoyment of political privileges.

Nor is the change less strikingly marked in the moral character of the nation. Look at the manners of our court, study the habits of our nobility and aristocracy, and what a striking contrast do they present to those of former days! And if we descend to the lower classes, where are the bull-baitings, the cock-fightings, and the coarse and brutal practices of bygone years? If they

occur, they are heard of with general surprise and disgust. A few years since, in a provincial town, some public event led to the appointment of a general holiday. Many entertainments were provided, and amongst others some of the old-fashioned vulgar sports were intended for the working classes. They, however, met, and passed resolutions, denouncing in strong terms the mistaken kindness of those who, under the idea of promoting the comfort of their fellow-countrymen, were offering an insult to their understandings by a supposition that such coarse amusements could be acceptable to them. There is, doubtless, much evil in this respect yet to be removed, but there is always a tendency to magnify present evils, and think lightly of present mercies. Each advocate for reformatory measures naturally draws a dark picture of the evil against which he is striving, and thus unintentionally produces an incorrect impression. We were struck some years since by the remark of an American friend who had been some time in London, that he had that day seen for the first time a drunken man; and it is certain that there is in this respect a great and increasing improvement in the habits of the nation; and we fear not to attribute the improvement of the morals of the people to those influences which have been directly and indirectly brought to bear upon them through the Sunday schools of our land.

If there should be any disposed to think that we have attributed too much influence to Sunday schools in connection with the intellectual and moral condition of England, we believe that even they will be ready to admit this influence to its full extent in relation to

its religious condition. What a delightful contrast do the present times present in this respect to those of former days! We see the clergy of the Church of England labouring diligently to provide for the religious instruction of the people, while the various bodies of Nonconformists are running a not unequal race. Some collisions are perhaps inevitable; but, on the whole, the result is good, for the religious instruction of the people is cared for to an extent which neither of these parties could alone have accomplished. It is well to remember the statement of Dr. Paley, an eminent dignitary of the English Church, on the subject of differences of religious opinion. He says — “They promote discussion and knowledge. They help to keep up an attention to religious subjects, and a concern about them, which might be apt to die away in the calm and silence of universal agreement. I do not know that it is in any degree true that the influence of religion is the greatest where there are the fewest Dissenters.” When we look at the number of buildings erected during the present century for public worship, the yearly increasing list of godly and studious ministers, the congregations of faithful men by whom those buildings are occupied, and where those ministers preach the gospel, and in connection with which such a variety of Christian influences are being continually sent forth, our hearts cannot but be filled with gratitude and joy.

Lord Mahon records that the Lord-Lieutenant, and for very many former years the representative in Parliament of one of the midland shires, had told him that when he came of age there were only two landed

gentlemen of his county who had family prayers; whilst at present, as he believed, there were scarcely two that have not. Nor can we forget that it was the Sunday school which stirred up this concern for the religious condition of the people—that many of those congregations and places of religious worship have originated with the Sunday school—that vast numbers of the ministers who there labour, as well as of the most successful missionaries who have gone forth amongst the heathen, have received their religious impressions and acquired their aptitude for public instruction in these institutions—and, finally, that an increasing conviction rests in the minds of thoughtful Christian men, that whatsoever influence the instruction of the day school may have on the intellectual and moral condition of the people, it is to our Sunday schools we must look for that sound scriptural instruction which, while it strengthens the mind, enlarges the intellectual, and purifies the moral faculties, will, at the same time, renew and sanctify the soul, and prepare it for a land of purity and of never-ending happiness, where the great work of redemption by Jesus Christ shall be completed, and God shall be All in all.

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